

Edited and reposted 1/9/07. If you find anymore errors in this chapter please let me know and I will correct them as I do the other chapters.

THE LORD OF AZKABAN

PART I

CONFRONTING THE LORD

By

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Albus Dumbledore sat quietly at the back of a rather small rickety wooden boat, lost in his own thoughts as it moved smoothly across the black water towards the bleak island prison of Azkaban. It had been many years since he himself had ventured to the island accompanying a confused and emotionless young man. A young man he had left there to die.

Harry Potter was only sixteen when he was sentenced to a life's sentence in Azkaban for the murder of what remained of his family. The verdict was read and he was shipped off for a lifetime of hell on earth on his birthday. The trial had lasted for only two days because of the weak defense while the ministry had produced witness after witness testifying against Harry about how much he hated the Dursleys for the way he was treated, even his best friends had testified against him. The court was against him from the start and even his defense counsel had all but refused to help him. Dumbledore himself added the finishing touch though, with his testimony of Harry's state of mind and actions at the end of his fifth year. Though he did not mention the prophecy, he was more than willing to speak about the rage that was built up after the fiasco in the Department of Mysteries and the death of Sirius Black.

Dumbledore remembered well the day he arrived on Privet Drive to speak with Harry only to find him sitting on the couch in shock while the Dursley's lay on the floor in pools of their own blood. He had immediately called for some Aurors to investigate the crime scene while he tried to speak with Harry. Harry, however, would not speak.

He did not speak a word throughout questioning, his trial or even on the journey to Azkaban, when prisoners are most often at their most vocal. The Headmaster and the entire magical world had taken his complete silence for guilt and just more proof that he was completely insane. It was not until just two days ago that they had discovered that the muggle police had solved the crime years ago when a young man by the name of Piers Polkis, a childhood friend of Dudley's, confessed to the crimes. After a great deal of arguments it was decided that Harry was to be released from Azkaban and brought to the Ministry for further questioning. But after seven years in prison Dumbledore was afraid of what shape Harry would be in.

As the boat pulled forward he looked around at those that had accompanied him. Ron and Hermione Weasley were hugging each other for support while Remus Lupin verbally berated himself for ever believing that Harry could commit such crimes. Severus Snape sat at the bow as he gazed intensely towards the formidable fortress just now coming into view. When news of Harry's innocence had spread, many believed the ill-tempered Potions Master would be rather smug, knowing that he had been one of the very few to be vocal in his belief that Harry could not have possibly committed such a crime but instead he immediately began making plans to get 'Potter' out of that hell hole. The old mage turned his gaze back toward their destination going over his thoughts on how he could ever make it up to the boy he once considered as a grandson, unaware of the pair of burning eyes that watched their steady approach.

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In the tall tower facing the shore, a man stood before the massive window and silently watched as the unwelcome 'guests' approached. The moonlight glittered off his bare body and reflected in his eyes. His face remained impassive but those eyes held only one emotion. Hatred! As he mused on how best to deal with the matter two pairs of warm arms wrapped around his body, begging for attention. He neither flinched at the sudden touch nor even acknowledged their presence. He briefly turned away as he felt the familiar and intoxicating cold sweep through his veins as a Dementor approached his chambers. A moment later, a deep rattling gasp sounded through the room as one of the dreaded guards of Azkaban entered.

“Yes, I know my friend. I have been expecting them for some time now.” The man replied to a seemingly unasked question. His voice was cold and harsh and reeked of power and command. After a moments pause the creature once again let loose its rattling breath as if it were some form of communication. The man simply chuckled darkly.

“That will not be necessary, they will be no trouble. Undoubtedly you and your brethren’s new strength will surprise and frighten them. We do not want to tip our hat too soon. Have your weakest, though it is merely a relative term, guard the gates and patrol the corridors on the lower level, I don’t want them to be overwhelmed too soon. I want you, yourself, to stand guard outside of Potter’s cell. When confronted by your power as they approach, even Dumbledore himself will get nervous, so after they get a taste, keep your distance. I will join you shortly.” He finished with a maniacal grin playing across his lips. The Dementor bowed deeply before gliding out to be sure his orders were carried out. With a smirk, he turned to survey the two bare women in front of him that had stretched themselves out across his massive bed.

They were both exceedingly beautiful women and seemed to have no aversions to the Dementor’s peculiar powers. They both stood just less than six feet tall and had pale skin due to their years in Azkaban. While their faces held similar aristocratic features, that was where the similarities end. While one had long flowing, glossy black hair and cold violet eyes, the other had shoulder length pink hair and kind blue eyes. While her eyes were considerably warmer than her Aunt Bellatrix’, Nymphadora Tonks’ still held a considerable amount of hate. Those two sets of eyes gazed hungrily at the man they both loved, the man that had saved them from their madness.

“Well, we have about forty five minutes before they reach Potter’s cell, whatever shall we do until then?” He asked in a mocking tone as he gazed lustfully at the exposed flesh before him. As if to answer the question, Tonks stood and leapt into the man’s arms, crushing her lips to his as she wrapped her legs around his waist. Being just as aroused as them, he quickly accepted her and collapsed onto the bed so they could join Bellatrix.

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Even before the boat had reached the shore both Snape and Dumbledore began looking back and forth between one another in confusion. Though it had been many years since either of them had been to the island prison, they could probably still build an accurate model of the place without looking at it. However, what they were looking at was a good deal larger than either remembered. Voldemort had launched an unsuccessful attack against the prison five years before but Dumbledore had heard of no modifications apart from the repairs. As the head of the Wizengamot he would have to personally sign off on any plans or funding to overtake such a task.

“Why didn’t we know about this?” Snape asked briskly as the boat made it ashore.

“I am at a loss myself. I was unaware of any modifications. I was here only briefly after Voldemort attacked as part of an investigation into how he was driven back.”

“Are we looking at the same building?” Ron asked sarcastically. “A group of first years could defend this place.”

“No, you don’t understand Mr. Weasley. At the time, the fortifications were nowhere near as extensive and since it is guarded almost solely by Dementors, Voldemort should have taken it easily. A year of investigation into the matter yielded no results.”

“This is all utterly FASINATING but we can sort all this out later. We have business to attend to.” Snape snapped as he turned and began marching towards the fortress. As the group entered the front gates they were immediately bombarded with ghastly images and memories as the freezing cold seemed to clutch at their hearts. Hermione went deathly pale and let out a loud whimper as she was assaulted by the memories of her parents' long and excruciating torture and death at the hands of Voldemort himself. The group quickly fled the gates and made their way into the entrance hall.

“My god!” Snape gasped. “I have never come across a Dementor that strong before! They must be ancient!” He said as he sucked air into his lungs. It was well known that Dementors, like the vampires and the phoenix, grow more powerful as they age.

“I have, many years ago.” Dumbledore said calmly although on the inside he was just as shaken up as everyone else. “Though I have been the head of the Wizengamot for fifty years I have not been in contact with every Dementor on this island. Those two were merely guarding the front gates, I do not relish the idea of meeting the clan leader.” He said in all honesty. The others seemed to pale even further at the thought. Unfortunately, for them, that was exactly who they would find.

“Headmaster?” Five heads swiftly spun around at the sound of a new voice. “What are you doing here?” The man asked in confusion. He seemed to be in his mid to late forties and about medium build with sandy blond hair. His features would probably be considered handsome if he got away from the Dementors long enough.

“Ah, Simon, it is good to see you! My friends, this is Simon McKinnon, the assistant warden. Simon, this is Remus Lupin, Ronald and Hermione Weasley and I believe you already know Severus Snape.” Dumbledore greeted kindly.

“It’s good to see you to.” Simon replied paying the others no mind but instead focusing solely on Dumbledore. “I’m sorry but we weren’t notified that you would be coming or I would have met you at the shore.” With a gentle probe around the man’s considerable mental shields he could clearly see that the man was genuinely confused and he wondered why Fudge had not sent word that they were coming and more specifically, why they were coming.

“It is quite alright, my boy, we managed.”

“Alright, well, what can I do for you?”

“We have come bearing a full pardon and release orders for Harry James Potter!” At the man’s shell-shocked appearance, he elaborated. “Evidence was recently discovered that has cleared him

of all charges.” He explained with remorse and pain etched into every word. After reading over the release forms, Simon quickly agreed to lead them to Harry’s cell himself. As they navigated the many passages and corridors they were blessed with only a few meetings with the Dementors but those proved to be encounters almost as bad as the two at the gates. Ron, Hermione and Remus were almost huddled together while only his pride kept Snape from joining them. Dumbledore and Simon, however, looked unfazed.

“Simon when were all of the additions to the prison's infrastructure constructed?” Dumbledore asked. He was both greatly curious and concerned how it was done without being notified.

“You didn’t know?” He asked with a shocked expression. “Minister Fudge ordered it to begin shortly after Voldemort attacked. We assumed that you knew.”

“No, I did not.” He replied with steel in his voice. He would have a great many things to discuss with Cornelius later but right now his main concern was Harry. As they descended the final stairwell a wave of icy air seemed to slam in to them with all the raging fury of an arctic blizzard. Albus looked up with wide eyes to see that Simon had passed out from the onslaught. Looking back he saw Ron and Hermione passed out on the stairs while both Remus and Snape seemed to be huddled against the wall in fear. Turning back towards his destination he felt terror strike his heart as he saw but a single Dementor, not the army he had expected. It looked like any other Dementor but it completely reeked of an ancient power. After seemingly gazing at Albus for a few moments, as if in contempt, it simply turned and glided back down the corridor.

Albus took a few minutes to steady his breath while he gripped his wand with white knuckles, as if for reassurance, before he calmed himself enough to turn his attention to his companions. After ‘stuffing’ large quantities of chocolate down the throats of Remus and Snape, he instructed them to help Ron and Hermione as he turned back to Simon. After waking up and finishing off several bars of chocolate, Simon leaned against the wall and put his head in his hands and sighed.

“Dementors are not nearly as bad as the rest of the world makes them out to be. Maybe it’s because I’m around them all the time but ever since I started working here I have had a strange sort of fascination with the creatures.” He spoke in a low monotone voice, barely above a whisper. “But that one,” He paused as he shook slightly. “Is by far the most powerful I have ever heard of.”

“Where did it come from?” Dumbledore asked. He was quite sure that it could not have been there for very long. Even with a hundred Dementors around, that one would be hard to miss.

“I don’t know. It just showed up one day a few years ago. There is no way to determine the exact age of a Dementor but judging from its power levels, most people here believe it may even be one of the first of its kind.” The man shivered considerably before pulling himself off the floor. “Come, we better hurry. I don’t know why but Potter has had a worse time of it than any other prisoner here. Even the ones that have been here for decades.”

“What do you mean?” Hermione asked in alarm with her mouth half full of chocolate.

“You must see for yourself.” Simon said with a sigh after a moment of trying to find the right words had failed. After leading the group halfway down the corridor that was blessedly free of Dementors, they came upon a solitary heavy iron door with nothing but a small closable safe-like door in the center that was used for occasional checks on the prisoner. Dumbledore and everyone else were greatly surprised to see that Harry was being held in one of the most secure cells that Azkaban housed. Not even Sirius Black had been held under such security during his imprisonment and he was considered the most dangerous prisoner ever held in the infamous prison before his name was cleared just a few short weeks after his death.

Simon placed his right hand flat against the cool iron of the door as the wards read his magical signature. At the same time he mumbled a very long phrase that obviously served as some sort of password and probably sought out voice recognition as well as the actual words. When finished he stood back and a moment later a deep creaking sound echoed through the dank stone corridor as the door began to

budge. With loud pops, rust shot out from the hinges, giving a clear indication of how long it had been since that very door had actually been opened. Harry's 'friends' were not prepared for the sight that lay before them.

The cell itself was only a four by six foot box that looked more like a dilapidated broom closet than any place that was meant to house a human being. The walls, floor and ceiling were all made of rough concrete and were all bare with the exception of a single thin woven straw mat they lay on the floor to serve as some form of bed and a bucket. Everyone, even Snape, who was used to spending long hours slaving over some of the most noxious concoctions known to man, gasped and quickly covered their mouths and noses against the stench that permeated the cell. However, the only thing more shocking than the conditions was the young man that was forced to endure them.

Harry Potter lay upon the thick matted moleskin coat that Hagrid had draped across his shoulders as he was led out of the courtroom on the day of his conviction. Even with the loud sobs of the first friend he ever had, Harry made no indication that he even realized where he was or understood the events going on around him. On a whole he had grown very little in the seven years that he had spent in Azkaban, probably due to the lack of proper nourishment and being enclosed in so small a place. From his position on the floor he still appeared to be just about five and a half feet tall and was painfully thin. Through the tattered fabric of his clothes you could easily make out the shape of his ribs and the skin on his arms and legs appeared to literally sag off of his bones. Even with these images burned into their minds forever nothing could have prepared them for the look on the young man's face.

His normally messy black hair was now very long and matted, covered in dirt and grim and even a bit of his own blood. Like the rest of his body his face had lost a considerable amount of weight and his cheek bones and jaw now stuck out like a sore thumb while his eyes seemed to have a sunken look to them as if they had been pushed further into his skull. But it was what these eyes contained that was truly frightening. The dull green orbs that once shined brightly and sparkled with so much life and compassion now seemed dead and

unfocused. If it were not for the fact that they could clearly hear him breathing in short shallow gasps, each one of them would have rightfully believed that he had been dead for some time.

Hermione burst into tears and Ron grew pale at the sight of their former best friend while Remus slumped to the floor with a cry that sound as if it came from some wounded animal, not a man. Snape quickly rushed to the boy's side as Dumbledore spoke urgently with Simon.

"How did this happen and why has he been left in the high security lock up for so long?" He asked gravely.

"He was first brought to this cell only a month after he first arrived to the island. He hasn't uttered a word since before his trial but while he is asleep he will often go into fits as if he is having some particularly disturbing dreams or visions. When the healers arrived for their monthly rounds he was asleep when they entered his cell and began running their tests. All of a sudden his eyes snapped open and he saw himself surrounded by people and attacked. Two of the healers and three guards were injured before we could stun him. He was brought down here immediately afterwards."

"You don't sound as if you were surprised. In fact you sound like you pity him." Snape commented with a sneer as he continued to check the boy. Simon sighed deeply before answering.

"Yes, I do. You can't work here for long without learning how to feel pity. I saw his eyes when he first awoke and saw the healers. They held pure terror, as if he believed Death himself had come for him. Whatever he see's in his dreams has obviously taken its toll on him and the presence of so many Dementors has not helped that fact. He has hardly moved in five years and the house elves that are employed to force feed the prisoners that have been given the Kiss have been forced to do the same for him, otherwise he would have wasted away long ago." He finished sadly but his explanation left them all confused about many things.

"If he has been incapacitated in such a way for so long then why has he spent those years locked up so securely?" Remus snapped at the man.

"After the attack on the healers he was brought down here like any other prisoner would, but after his month of confinement was up Minister Fudge ordered that he be confined indefinitely in the high security block to insure the safety of himself and everyone else. Chief Warden Daniels agreed without question." The assistant warden replied. It was clear from his tone that he had absolutely no respect for his superior who had not even been to the prison in years. Preferring to remain in his office in the Ministry while his assistant is forced to carry out all of his duties as well as his own. Dumbledore growled in disgust and was about to go on some rant about Fudge's apparent incompetence but was cut off by Snape.

"Albus, we have to get Potter to the hospital wing now!" Snape nearly shouted to get the old man's attention.

"Is he going to be alright?" Hermione asked in a meek voice, to which Snape simply replied by giving the girl a glare that clearly asked, 'are you kidding?' Physically he was a mess, but the emotional strain of those he knew and loved condemning him to hell on earth would far exceed any physical scars. 'Stupid girl.' He thought to himself as he pulled out his wand and leveled it at Harry.

"That won't work!" Simon suddenly spoke up drawing curious and confused looks towards him. "Part of the new fortifications is some new and more powerful magical wards, including a magical suppressor shield. Unless we are under attack no magic can be performed in the cells or corridors unless you are temporarily keyed into the wards and that only happens when the healers or visitors come. I can't even perform magic here on a regular basis anymore and I run this place." He informed them with annoyance in his voice. Snape growled in frustration and turned to Remus.

"Lupin, help me get the boy up!" He ordered. Remus, being so concerned for Harry didn't even blink at his school boy enemy giving him orders. After all, Snape believed in Harry's innocence when nearly everyone else, including himself, did not. So who was he to

argue? Each man put one of Harry's arms across their shoulders and easily hoisted him off the ground. Even with their knowledge of his physical condition both men were extremely shocked at how little he weighed. Their fifteen minute journey back to the front gates was strangely Dementor free. Not that they were complaining but it was a fact that confused them greatly, especially when those that were guarding the front gates were absent as well.

Everyone breathed a large sigh of relief as they exited the prison and they heard the massive front gates shut behind them. As they made their way towards the shore, everyone had the same feeling that something about the island was not right and Dumbledore was determined to find out what it was as soon as he was sure Harry would be alright. They were about twenty yards from the boat when something unexpected happened. Both Remus and Snape lurched forward with such force that they were forced to release their hold on Harry and it was a miracle that they did not end up face down in the dirt. Everyone drew their wands and turned swiftly to meet the new threat and came face to face with what seemed to be an impossibility. Granted, Harry was still on the same spot that Remus and Snape had released him but it was NOT the same Harry Potter they had been carrying out of the prison just moments ago.

Sitting in a large plush leather armchair was Harry Potter with his intense green gaze leveled at the four wizards and one witch standing opposite him. His dirty ragged appearance was now gone, replaced with an aura of power and the will of one that was used to being in control. Instead of the short, skinny shell of a human being he had appeared to be, he now seemed to be just about six feet tall with two hundred pounds of well toned muscle. His long matted hair was now clean and fell gracefully down to just above his elbows. His eyes seemed to bore out of his chiseled features and drill into the very souls of those before him.

"Sit down!" Harry said in a soft yet commanding voice. His guests looked even more confused before they were quickly shoved backwards by an invisible force and were suddenly sitting down on a rather large couch that had them all facing Harry directly. Everyone simply stared at Harry in shock for several moments before he grew tired of their ignorance and began.

"We need to talk!" Harry said coldly as he gazed at the people before him. Surprisingly the only one he did not look upon with unmasked hostility was Professor Snape. "First, let me give you a little background."

"The night that I was brought here, I was subjected to the worst beating I have ever experienced. It's normal around here for new prisoners to be ruffed up a bit when they first arrive but for me it was exceptionally harsh. After all, how often do the guards around here get the opportunity to hurt a 'legend'. They damn near killed me. It was at this time that I came to a realization. Since I entered the wizarding world I wanted to prove myself, prove that I belonged and later prove that I could live up to the reputation and image I had been branded with since I was a year old. But in that moment I came to ask myself a pivotal question. Why the fuck should I care what the world thinks of me? Why do I want acceptance from a world that raises me up one moment only to send me crashing down the next?" At this point everyone was looking anywhere but at Harry as they thought about his words but most of all they were in confusion about the situation.

"For two years I was essentially a prisoner in my own mind. Bombarded with images to grotesque for words and assaulted by pain so brutal no man should ever experience. Then, Voldemort came and changed that." With this last statement everyone tensed up believing Harry had indicated that he had joined with the Dark Lord. This caused Harry to smirk with a great deal of pleasure. "When Voldemort landed on this island something snapped in me. A power that had been kept at bay all of my life was released, clearing my head and my senses and the first thought that came to mind was that someone was attacking my home." Everyone looked suitably horrified and shocked, both by Harry claiming that Azkaban was his home but also of the idea that he held enough power to drive off Voldemort and his Death Eaters single handedly.

"You, you stopped that attack yourself?" Dumbledore asked in a shaky voice. He was widely considered the most powerful wizard in the world and he found his own true power a bit disconcerting. But if what Harry was saying was true, then he had more power than he

could even begin to fathom. Harry's eyes shined as if he had read his old Headmaster's thoughts.

"Indeed."

"Than I assume you are also behind the added fortifications?"

"When Voldemort and most of the Death Eaters were driven back, they left a large number of their fellows behind. The existing structure just wasn't capable of housing them. Especially since at that time we had a steady flow of new inmates coming in." Harry replied with an emotionless voice that the others found disturbing but Dumbledore was not to be dissuaded from going after all the information he could get about the extent of Harry's powers and what had gone on here.

"If all of this happened after the attack then how is it that no one knew anything about these modifications?"

"The people here, guards, the warden and even the healers and guests that come to this island from time to time believe precisely what I want them to and more importantly, REMEMBER what I want them to."

"You put memory charms on all of them?" Both Dumbledore and Remus asked in shock at the same time which brought a sneer to Harry's face that Snape couldn't help but admire.

"What I have done here is hardly that simple. Any moron with a wand could perform a memory charm. Lockhart proved that conclusively. Take your friend Simon in there for example. While he is here he accepts every change that has been made at face value. He remembers reading over and signing off on the work orders and plans from the ministry. He remembers the construction mages working for months to double the prison's infrastructure and housing capacity and later the inspectors. What he doesn't realize is that none of it ever happened. When he leaves this island he will be completely incapable of speaking of the changes. He has gone on for five years now, never questioning any of it, never believing anything was wrong. Originally, I did this because I did not want Voldemort to get an idea at how my powers had grown. I planned to find out who really killed

my relatives and get my name cleared. Possibly re-enter my life some where. But, then I discovered something.” If possible the fire in his eyes seemed to freeze and became even harder. He reached behind him and pulled the old moleskin coat off the back of the chair where he had placed it.

“I’m sure you recognize this!” He stated coldly as he glared at Dumbledore and Remus. Both men seemed to go rigid under his gaze as Ron and Hermione felt tears come to their eyes. Snape, of course, looked as stoic as ever but he felt the loss as much as the rest of them. “Both of you were here that night Hagrid and the others tried to break me out of this prison. Tell me, were either of you responsible for his death? But that is enough of that, let’s get back to the subject at hand.” Dumbledore nodded readily which confirmed Harry’s suspicion. As a half giant, Hagrid was resistant to a great many curses and it would take a very powerful wizard to stun him, much less kill him. As a result of the ill-fated rescue attempt, Hagrid was killed, Tonks was captured and the Weasley twins, Lee Jordan, Angelina Johnson, Alicia Spinnet and Katie Bell were now on the run from Aurors who were after their heads.

“So, why are you here?” He asked in a silky voice that seemed to make everyone shiver. After some time, Dumbledore composed himself enough to answer, he could see clearly that this ‘new Harry’ was not going to be easy to convince of his sincerity.

“Well, new evidence has been discovered that proves your innocence, so we immediately petitioned for a pardon. It was granted this morning so we came to release you from this island.” He explained with genuine regret while he tried to figure out how Harry had become so obviously powerful while in Azkaban. Harry simply smirked when he heard his answer.

“Don’t try to play games with me old man. I know perfectly well the situation in the outside world and more importantly the motives behind you getting me out of here.” Harry replied harshly. Dumbledore seemed to pale just a fraction while everyone else looked confused. And judging by Snape’s confusion he hadn’t even informed his ‘inner circle’ of the Order about the prophecy. “Ah, you have not told them yet, have you?” He asked with a smirk. “For seven

years you have been fighting, slowly being pushed back and you have not told them that the fight is hopeless.

“You see, Dumbledore, I know perfectly well why you are here. And despite what you have told others or try telling me, you are not here on some mercy mission. The only reason you started looking into the Dursley’s murder again was Voldemort. You never once even entertained the idea that I could be innocent. You simply wanted to find something that could get the case thrown out on a technicality. Believing that I would be eternally grateful for getting me out of this hell, you hoped to simply throw me at Voldemort and solve both problems. Tell me, was it a shock when you discovered that the muggles correctly solved this case six years before you?”

“Harry...” Dumbledore began but was immediately cut off by Harry.

“Do not call me by that name as if you know me!” He said calmly but with a very dangerous edge. “Harry Potter is gone, he no longer exists. He died the day you threw him away. There are very few humans I have continual contact with and names are rarely needed between us and Dementors are unable to speak any human language so a name in this place is all but obsolete. Now, what were you saying?” The old mage sighed sadly, this was not going anywhere near the way he had planned it. He had expected Harry to be grateful and eager to leave the island but the opposite seemed to be true.

“You have to understand the position we were in. All the evidence pointed to you.” The Headmaster argued as if he were trying to reassure himself more than explain himself to Harry. His words merely brought a harsh laugh from Harry’s throat and a roll of the eyes from Snape as if he and the Headmaster had had this very argument several times in the past.

“Wrong Dumbledore! NONE of the evidence pointed at me. The only things that were recorded by the investigators were that I was at the scene of the crime and I would not say anything. And why did I say nothing, because I was in shock. They had no witnesses, no physical evidence. They were stabbed to death and yet there was no murder weapon. The only thing they did have was you as the primary witness

against me. Spouting off to the court about how much I had changed after the fight in the Department of Mysteries and how I had been corrupted with dark magic and had chosen the same path as Voldemort. You even went out of your way to convince my friends of my guilt because we all know that in one hundred and fifty years the exulted Albus Dumbledore has never been wrong. If he believes something then it must be true. You won't even entertain the idea of being wrong until it is too late." Harry stopped for a few moments to think his words over. In the meantime the minds of the five 'guests' were racing. After thinking it over for several moments Harry decided to inform the others about the contents of the prophecy for the simple reason being that he wanted to see their reactions.

"I find it rather amusing that many members of your order, even a handful of your students, had fought and risked their very lives to protect that prophecy and yet you have told no one what it says. Well I will tell you now."

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... And either must die at the hands of the other, for neither can live while the other survives... The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies."

"So, that means that only you can kill Voldemort?" Hermione asked quietly after about a minute, not looking Harry in the eye. The old Harry, the one she had been friends with would have faced Voldemort as soon as possible if it meant saving lives. However, this was not the old Harry.

"Yes, I believe it does!" Harry responded in an offhand manner as if it did not matter much to him. Their reactions had been about what he figured they would be. Hermione had analyzed every word and every line until she had come to the correct conclusion. Ron's eyes seemed to have glazed over in confusion by the time he was half way through. Remus looked about ready to have a heart attack and Snape looked a bit more pale than usual though he still looked as unfazed and in

control as ever and the look in his eyes gave Harry the impression that he knew of this already. And Dumbledore just look weary.

“So, what are you going to do?” Ron asked timidly as if Harry were some enormous snarling beast ready to pounce at any moment. The other four looked at Harry expectantly while waiting for the answer but they grew increasingly nervous as a malicious grin spread across his face.

“Oh, I won’t kill him. I have something much better in mind. One day, after he has eliminated his enemies elsewhere, in other words, you, he will return here again to try to claim this fortress for himself. Not to mention free all of his captured servants. On that day he will meet his defeat, not before.” He responded in an emotionless voice.

“WHAT! So you would just leave innocent people to be slaughtered?” Hermione raged.

“Those same 'innocent' people who sent an innocent fifteen year old boy to what amounts to hell on earth.” Harry shot back scathingly. “What right do those people have to ask me for help. The whole lot of them are cowards who are so frightened by a mere name that when it comes to defending their own families they falter. For the first two years I was here I saw nothing but Voldemort’s activities and the crimes committed by his Death Eaters. The effects of the Dementors only strengthened the bond between us. I saw every victim, I felt every curse. I even saw one man murder his entire family in front of Voldemort in the hopes that he would let him live. I have neither the time nor the inclination to fight for a world that will not fight for itself. Who knows, maybe living under Voldemort’s boot for a while will force this world to grow a pair of balls.”

“This world IS fighting! And everyday we are dying.” Dumbledore said in a weary voice.

“Oh, grow up Dumbledore. Get off your ass and take look around! In case you haven’t noticed, you are now in the minority. You believe that fighting and ridding the world of Voldemort and his Death Eaters is the only option. However the vast majority have thrown away their morals and are prepared to give them free reign. They no longer

believe Voldemort to be their greatest threat. That title now falls on you.” Harry stated looking directly into the old headmaster's eyes. Upon seeing everyone's confused and shocked expressions he continued. “Each one of you have been fighting this war for a long time and you have not changed your views or loyalties, surely you are not naive enough to believe that the entire world is as honorable. Most of the wizarding world now believes that if you would just stop your ‘foolish’ and ‘impossible’ crusade, then Voldemort would leave them alone. As it is, your most dangerous enemy is not the Death Eaters but the countless number of cowards out there that would rather live in fear and be subjected to torture rather than fight for their families.”

“It would not be foolish or impossible as you say if you helped us.” Remus spoke up for the first, grief mixed with hope shining in his eyes. Harry looked at him for a long moment before replying.

“Sirius may have been willing to work with those who betrayed him after he escaped from this island. However, I am not as forgiving.”

“Leaving people to face their deaths when you could prevent it because you don't feel like it makes you just the same as Voldemort.” Hermione screamed in rage. Harry eyed her curiously for a moment.

“I'm the same as Voldemort? Voldemort wants the world, and if he can't have it, he will destroy it. I on the other hand, would be content to simply watch the world destroy itself. Seven years ago I would have gladly fought to the death to protect any one of you, or anyone else for that matter, now I am the man you see in front of you. You claim that I am the same as Voldemort? You are the ones who sent me here and caused this change. So, Hermione, tell me, what does that make you?” He cruelly asked, knowing the impact it would have on all of them.

At this point Hermione burst into tears and threw herself into Ron's arms as he glared at his former best friend. He was working himself into a rant and was prepared to tell Harry exactly how he felt when two cloaked figures approached from the main gates leading a small group of six ragged individuals. Much as they had earlier, the group instinctually reached for their wands, however they quickly drew

those wands when they recognized the platinum blond hair of Lucius Malfoy. Harry looked on in amusement as Ron, Hermione and Remus leveled their wands at the new arrivals and Dumbledore looked torn between pointing his at the Death Eaters or Harry himself. Snape remained seated but with the exception of his look of confusion, he seemed to share Harry's amusement at his colleague's reaction.

"If you think they're a threat, you are sorely mistaken. A first year could best the lot of them." Harry chuckled as the two cloaked figures knocked the six men to their knees just a few feet from Harry's chair. Gone was the proud arrogant aristocrat Malfoy had been. In his place was a frail broken man whose eyes reflected only pain.

"What happened to him?" Remus asked in shock. He had no love for any Malfoy but the current state of the man left him with little else to say.

"Despite popular belief, Dementors feed off negative memories and emotions, not positive. If the opposite were true as everyone believes, then a Patronus Charm would serve only to feed the Dementor and make it stronger instead of driving it off. Malfoy here seems to have a great many bad memories, I'm afraid." He explained with a grin. The two cloaked figures seemed to shake slightly as if they were trying to prevent themselves from laughing. After glancing at the two fondly, surprising the others slightly, Harry continued. "Of course, even without the Dementors he would still be in very bad condition. Bella really went to work on him."

"Bella, who's Bella?" Dumbledore asked though he had a sinking suspicion of who Harry was talking about.

"Why don't you two lower your hoods and join us? I don't think that lot is going anywhere." On Harry's word the two figures lowered their hoods. At this point even Snape could not contain his shock at seeing Nymphadora Tonks and a completely sane Bellatrix Lestrange standing side by side. Tonks looked as she always did, young, attractive and full of energy. Bellatrix though surprised them. Gone were the haunted eyes and worn features that came with nearly two combined decades in Azkaban. She looked much as she did upon her graduation from Hogwarts, the very definition of aristocratic

elegance. Both women smiled widely and greeted the group cheerfully though their eyes held anything but happiness.

Upon seeing Bellatrix perfectly healthy, a cold rage surged through Remus for the woman that had killed his best friend. The greatest day of his life in the last seven years was the day Neville Longbottom tortured her until her mind snapped after she had killed his grandmother. Given the situation and her position as a very dangerous Death Eater, no charges were filed against him for use of an Unforgivable. That was the official reason for letting Neville off but the real reason was that after he had snapped her mind, Neville himself had a nervous breakdown and now occupied a bed in Saint Mungos, it is unexpected that he will ever recover. But seeing her here, now, as if it had never happened brought back all the pain and anguish he had felt after Sirius' death.

"AVADA KADAVRA!" He roared as he pointed his wand directly at her heart. She however did not move, merely raised an elegant eyebrow as if he had simply made some incoherent insult. When the curse was halfway to its target everyone jumped back in shock as the curse suddenly dropped and collided with the ground. Tonks stood at her aunt's side, shaking from trying to contain her glee at the shocked and horrified faces before them.

"I would advise you not to try that again." Harry said calmly though a deaf man could detect the hate and contempt in his warning. He calmly stood and walked to the two women and kissed each deeply before the trio returned to Harry's chair that had expanded to accommodate them all. Everyone stood horrified at the recent actions of 'The-Boy-Who-Lived'. No one could decide which was more disturbing; the fact that Harry could so easily deflect the killing curse or that he did it to protect Bellatrix Lestrange. Then, of course, it was quite obvious that he was 'involved' with both women.

"Let me get this straight. You were basically insane until Voldemort attacked and for some reason this 'power' was released. You drove Voldemort back on your own, doubled the size of the prison without the ministry finding out and are now 'involved' with Tonks AND Bellatrix Lestrange." Ron summarized with a confused look.

"That about sums it up yeah." Harry replied in an off hand manner.

"And you let her torture the prisoners!" Hermione screeched as she glanced over to the broken figure of Lucius Malfoy.

"We all have our hobbies!" He said in a dismissive tone causing Bellatrix giggled. However, even with these new developments Remus' rage was not to be dissuaded.

"HARRY, HOW COULD YOU? THAT BITCH KILLED SIRIUS AND NOW YOU'RE PROTECTING HER."

"AND HOW MANY HAVE YOU KILLED, WEREWOLF?" Harry nearly screamed as he jumped out of his chair to cut Remus off, surprising everyone, Tonks and Bellatrix included, with his tone and mention of the other man's Lycanthropy. "You have been fighting Death Eaters most of your life, in that time how many have died at your hand. Bottom line is that in war people die no matter what side you are on and those people have family and friends who would probably just love to hurt the person who took their loved ones away, but they don't because they knew what they were getting into. What makes you any different? What makes you so special that you're entitled to do whatever you want because your feelings got hurt? I will say this only once! At the moment, you are on MY island, you fuck up again and you will find yourself in a cell for the amusement of the Dementors. While we are on this subject of short comings, lets turn our attention elsewhere.

"Hermione, you were one of my best friends. In the five years that we were together, you probably knew me better than anyone." By this time Harry's rage was beginning to become so obvious it was almost visible. Ron, Hermione and Remus were ready to jump to their feet and make a run for the boat if it weren't for one thing. They found that they were completely incapable of moving anything below their shoulders. They traded nervous glances around at their colleagues only to find that they were in the same situation, unable to move and dreading Harry's intentions. "What did I ever do to make you believe I was capable of cold blooded murder? My trial began two days after I was arrested, so it didn't take long to convince you I was guilty before you testified. No, in the end you are nothing better than those

sniveling whores you always tried to set yourself apart from. Believing everything that is fed to you without a second thought, whether it comes from Rita Skitter or some dimwitted crumpled up has been of a professor that has been getting by on nothing more than his name for the last sixty years.

“Then we have Ron Weasley. From a family that believes in love and unity above everything else. What did you do to your family Ron? In the end you and Percy were the only ones that truly believed me guilty, but the two of you had to pound it in to the rest of them for their own good. How is your family these days Ron? How much of that love is left? Ginny is an outcast after those rumors you spread around because she would not accept your views, a twenty two year old virgin that everyone believes to be a whore, servicing Death Eaters in Knockturn Alley. Bill and Charlie have not been back to England in years and Fred and George are on the run. I hear you have boasted that you would kill them yourself if you found them first. Then of course you have your parents. When was the last time they have even been seen in the same room together? The Weasley family is dead, bound together by nothing more than a name. Your work Ron, good job.”

“And last but not least, we have Albus Dumbledore. Fighting valiantly against the world he created. Have you ever accepted responsibility for that? ‘Albus Dumbledore, the man who created Voldemort.’ That would make for an interesting title to list with all the others wouldn’t it? Armando Dippet was a bumbling and incompetent fool. After you defeated Grindlewald you were Headmaster in everything but name. You knew the conditions of that orphanage and the brutality which Tom Riddle heaped upon the muggle children around him and yet you did nothing. You stood by and let it happen when it was your responsibility to make sure that all students without a permanent legal guardian were taken care of and raised in a safe environment. Through your indifference you aided him in becoming what he is today. But hell, you were the great Albus Dumbledore, defeater of the greatest Dark Lord of all time, riding high and reaping the benefits of your fame. What did you care about what one single child did? When you finally did look in on him before his first year you knew what he was and yet you did nothing. He actually managed to teach himself to control his accidental magic to an extent and used it to inflict pain in

others whether they deserved it or not. Once again, you knew of his actions and once again you did nothing.

“But fast forward fifty years and you are in the same situation. Sending a boy away each summer to a home he despised and where he was despised in return. The only difference is that you need this child. You need him to clean up your mess. Then when it seems you are in the same position yet again you think to yourself, ‘Albus my boy, you fucked up again.’ You must be thinking that a great deal these days Professor.” He continued in a mocking voice as though he were reprimanding an infant. Even with all of his self restraint and calm under pressure Professor Dumbledore could not help but hang his head slightly in shame as he recognized Harry’s words as truth but he quickly shook this off, now was not the time for regrets. As they sat in silence for a few moments they all continued unsuccessfully to move and even Dumbledore was beginning to panic.

Though he had not moved, Snape found early on that he was not being restrained like the others obviously were. As he listened intently to Harry’s words he tried to think of any possible reason for this and a number of very minor things he had observed throughout their ‘discussion’. The foremost on his mind was ‘POTTER’S’ total lack of hostility towards HIM. After pacing for a moment to calm himself, Harry retook his seat between Tonks and Bella.

“Now, let me return to my original question. Why are you here?” He asked again in a calm tone while the two women on either side of him grinned as they saw the conflict behind Dumbledore’s eyes.

Albus knew that he could not lie at this stage. If they were to have any hope of gaining Harry’s support he would have to come clean. However, that would also mean admitting that he was wrong and literally beg for forgiveness. Neither were acts that he has had to do often in his long life. But maybe there were other options.

“I wanted to correct old mistakes...”

“Don’t think you can simply start moving things into your favor like you are merely playing some game. If you were here for the sole

reason of correcting mistakes I would have been set free as well when you came for him. As it is, you would have left me here to rot.” Tonks burst out in rage. Dumbledore looked momentarily taken aback before he composed himself.

“Mrs. Tonks, it was decided by the Ministry that despite the fact that Mr. Potter was indeed innocent, attempting to break someone out of Azkaban is still a crime and the punishment must still be carried out.”

“Really, then why aren’t you sitting in a cell right now?” Tonks asked with a straight, expressionless face as she stood only to seat herself in Harry’s lap. “Although Sirius was innocent, you are still guilty of aiding a known escaped convict. No disrespect to Professor Snape here, but you are also guilty of perjury from when you spouted out one lie after another at Snape’s trial after the first fall of Voldemort. He may have been your spy but he still committed the crimes for which he was charged.” Dumbledore, who was used to being in charge, was feeling the mounting pressure and strain of the ‘meeting’. In a last ditch effort, he tried to take control.

“Harry, I must insist that...” Immediately he knew he made a mistake.

“DON’T INSIST!” Harry roared as he slammed his fist down on the newly vacated arm of the chair. “Insistent people make me angry.” He nearly growled, not bothering to warn the old man about the use of his name. Checking her watch Bellatrix leaned over and whispered something into Harry’s ear. After taking a deep breath Harry nodded and then turned back to the others.

“Well, it is about time we finish this up. These six men,” He said waving in the direction of Lucius Malfoy and his ‘companions’, “All finish their sentences tomorrow. I figure that since you are already here you might as well take them back to shore with you. Normally one of my Dementors would accompany you but I think you can manage very well on your own.”

“YOUR Dementors?” Snape questioned in a strained voice remembering the power he felt off them.

"It is a relationship of mutual convenience. They stay here and guard the prisoners and the island and they have a rather large group of wizards and witches with plenty of bad memories to feed off of. Plus, I made them more powerful and I can take that power away should I choose to. Any more questions?"

"Actually, I do have one!" Everyone was looking between Snape and Harry with surprise written on all their features. They simply could not believe that the two were speaking civilly to each other. "With the power that you obviously have, why bother building all of these extra fortifications?"

"That is a relevant question and the answer to that is obvious. Protection! Not for me of course but for my girls here. Originally I merely built extra space for the prisoners I captured when Voldemort attacked but after I had finished that I went through the prison to see if I knew anybody. Imagine my surprise when I found Tonks here. So I let her out and shielded her from the Dementors. Later on we got bored and decided to find someone else to talk to and since Bellatrix was the only one that we both knew to any extent, she was chosen. And believe it or not I actually found that I loved them both and would do anything to keep them safe. So I built the extra fortifications to protect them if Voldemort decides to attack again, sooner than I thought and I am not here for some reason."

"Why are you so confident that he will attack again?" Dumbledore asked.

"Because when he came here last time he was driven back easily and very quickly. Voldemort is an egomaniac and knows that there is something powerful here, and more importantly, his Death Eaters know that as well. He cannot afford to have his followers believing that there is someone or something stronger than him. So he will have no choice. He will come and then he will discover the true meaning of power. However, if he doesn't come that is fine by me as well. If he wants the world then he can have it, but this is MY island. It will be mine until the end of days and if he thinks otherwise then he will know nothing but pain until his body rots and his bones turn to dust." He said with such venom in his voice that even Snape flinched. "Then, of course, there is you and the Ministry." He continued looking

directly into Dumbledore's eyes. The Headmaster looked momentarily surprised before he schooled his features into a puzzled expression which just served to annoy Harry.

"Don't look so surprised! I may have lived the last seven years of my life in a prison but don't make the mistake of thinking me ignorant on how things work. If you thought me to be a threat all those years ago, our conversation has only amplified that belief. When I take care of Tom, if you are still alive your new priority will be to deal with me. Someone with my abilities is a threat to you and your ideal of what the world should be. Not to mention my anger and hatred toward the wizarding world, and more importantly, the justification behind it. You and all of those petty bureaucrats will want me in check so I can't endanger the general public. Well let me clue you in so you don't waste countless lives in the attempt. YOU. CAN'T. BEAT. ME!" He said emphasizing every word. "Not even with the whole of the ministry at your back. Let me clue you in on a little secret. Not only does this place have new fortifications, wards and defenses but many other things as well. Including Bella here," He said with a fond smile as looked her in the eye. "Who is without a doubt the most powerful witch since Rowena Ravenclaw herself but..." Ron cut Harry off as he scoffed at the idea of Bellatrix Lestrange being as powerful as the Hogwarts founder.

"Well Neville sure took care of her pretty well." He snorted in disgust as he looked at the Death Eater but quickly silenced under Harry's glare.

"Neville, though clumsy, was a lot stronger and more skilled than any of you ever gave him credit for. He also had the determination to defeat the woman that took his parents and grandmother from him. But most importantly, she was a Death Eater. As Snape could tell you Voldemort makes sure all his servants are one hundred percent dependant on him. In this way he keeps them, especially his more powerful, from ever reaching their full potential and rising enough to where they may try to take his place. Now, however, she depends on no one."

"What makes you so certain that you could defeat him if he throws all of his Death Eaters against you?" Dumbledore asked with his eyes

downcast as he knew that he would not be able to change Harry's mind but he would still try to get all the information that he could.

"Simple really. Despite the fact that I am probably the most powerful human to ever walk the earth and even Bella's power and Tonks' incredible skill, we still have one thing left in our favor. I have managed to achieve something that Tom has sought after his entire life." He said as he and the two women grinned like maniacs. Everyone looked from one to another in confusion until realization set in on the faces of Dumbledore and Snape. Snape seemed to go even paler than he was before but he seemed sunburned in comparison to Dumbledore who had gone chalk white.

"You... You..." The old man stuttered.

"Exactly." Bella nearly yelled with a triumphant whoop. "When he said this would be his island until the end of time, he wasn't exaggerating."

"Voldemort couldn't kill me with all his Death Eaters and you and your pathetic Order aiding him. A lovely gift I have shared with Bella and Tonks here." Everyone sat there gaping for several moments, much to their amusement, before Remus found his voice.

"If that is true, then why did you bother deflecting my killing curse?"

"One, though I have shared the gift of immortality with them, so the killing curse will not kill them, they are still training themselves to block out the considerable amount pain it will still cause. And two, I think it was an act that sent my message fairly well."

"And what message was that?" Ron asked with contempt in his voice as he looked upon his former best friend.

"Don't fuck with me." He answered as he looked each of his 'guests' in the eye. After a moment of silence Tonks nudged Harry and showed him her watch. "Ok, well this meeting is over. Don't forget to take Malfoy and his little friends with you and have a safe journey." He said with a good deal of sarcasm as he lifted Tonks off his lap and stood up. Dumbledore nodded in resignation and collected the Death

Eaters and began heading back to shore with his shoulders slumped and looking every bit like a one hundred and sixty year old man. Ron and Hermione followed silently after him realizing that they had in fact killed their best friend years before when they helped to hand him over to the Dementors. However Remus and Snape stayed. Remus looking furious and Snape looking pensive.

“For the first time I am actually glad that Lily and James are dead. They would be ashamed of you.” The livid werewolf growled, his eyes glowing in fury. Harry was not impressed.

“Who would they be more ashamed of? Me, for being who I am, or you, for making me who I am?” He asked in a calm voice. This question, it seemed, changed Remus’ whole demeanor. In the place of a raging werewolf, ready to ATTEMPT to rip Harry limb from limb, was now a broken down shell of self pity that nearly ran back to the boat with Snape following slowly after him.

“Professor Snape!” Harry called politely after him. The aforementioned professor turned quickly in surprise with his hand moving toward his wand in case his former student was looking for retribution for his past abuse but he was puzzled to see a genuine ‘friendly’ face.

“Yes.” He answered as he relaxed a little but his hand still did not stray far from his wand, a fact that Harry seemed to find both amusing and looked on with approval. After all, the man had been spying on Voldemort for over twenty years, he should be cautious in such situations.

“Just to let you know, I am grateful that you had believed me innocent and had even worked to get me out of here. I was intent on merely thanking you and letting it be but was asked to give you the chance to join us here, given the situation in the rest of the world at this time.” He said with a straight face, however Snape could tell that he wouldn’t have asked if he was against it. Out of curiosity the Potions Master looked toward Tonks and Bella, wondering why either of them would want to give him a ‘safe haven’ during this war. He and Lestrangle had always detested each other and he found Tonks to be a clumsy fool. Seeing his confusion, Harry laughed. He took Snape

by the arm and began leading him along the shore, away from the boat to keep out of hearing range of Dumbledore.

“No, it was neither of them. You see, when I told Dumbledore that names were all but obsolete here, it was only half true. That was the case up until three years ago, when I started poking around in the outside world again and found out what has been going on. Since then the, um, ‘residency’, of this island has grown. The people that actually live here now are few when it comes to general terms and it will remain that way, but this island has become more of a city than a prison. The renovations are far more extensive than they appear from this vantage point. Everyone here are good people, though many have been called upon to do some pretty distasteful things in the past, but they all have one common trait. They are tired of their leader’s political rhetoric and motivations. In other words, they have ‘lost faith’. Whether it be in Voldemort, Dumbledore, or Fudge. They no longer wish to serve as tools of those who wish to press their will onto others, myself included, but are unwilling, for whatever reason, to join the ‘other side’.”

“What does this have to do with me? You are putting a lot of trust in me by giving me this information.” Snape asked with both curiosity and nervousness. What ‘Potter’ was saying could be seen as treason by the Ministry so why would he tell him. It sounded as though he were building an army to fight both Voldemort and Dumbledore.

“Not really, I could prevent you from repeating this to anyone, and quite easily at that. I know what you are thinking, and no I am not figuring on fighting a war. I could defeat them both without the help of my own private army. And no, I do not need you as a spy. I do, however, need you as a teacher.”

“What?” Snape questioned as he stopped in surprise. This was clearly not what he was thinking.

“Many of those that have come here have brought their families with them. They came to get away from the madness going on but to do that meant removal from Hogwarts or other magical schools. We have a good deal of children here that still need to learn. Yes, I am powerful and could handle myself well even without most of that

power but I don't have the knowledge that you do. I can show people how to defend themselves but I don't have the dark arts knowledge for more advanced study and no amount of power can help me with my total lack of skill where potions are concerned." Snape could do nothing but snort in agreement.

"Currently defense is being taught by the warden here..."

"Simon? I thought his memory was being modified, that he didn't know anything about what has been happening here?" The older man asked in surprise causing Harry to grin.

"His name isn't Simon. The real Simon McKinnon killed himself two years ago while testing a few charms he had created. Destroyed nearly everything in his quarters including himself. I took the opportunity to cover it up and put someone else in his place to make everything run smoother. The man was not married or had any close family or friends so it was relatively easy. But as I was saying, he is a good teacher but he tends to scare the kids to death and it's not his favorite thing to do. And while you terrify your students, you manage to do it in such a way that they hang on your every word and remember it. For potions our current teacher is a former apprentice of your's but his unfortunate incarceration cut off his lessons so he still has a great deal to learn."

"WHAT? MY APPRENTICE? I have only had one and he... was... sent...!"

"Here!" Harry finished for him with a grin. "Like you, he has been spying on Voldemort, only his information was coming to me. Dumbledore's crusade against him last year put a damper on things but hey, we do what we can."

"You mean he's not, well, you know?" he asked nervously.

"Insane? No, he isn't. When he was brought here, I met him on the beach, changed around a few memories for the Aurors and sent them back. They believe he has being held in the minimum security block since the evidence against him was rather weak, but, like me, he had Dumbledore standing against him. He didn't have contact with any of

the Dementors until after I saw him and made sure he was resistant to them.” He informed his former professor who nodded gratefully, relief filling his eyes.

“Thank you. I take it Draco is the one to ask that I come here?”

“Yes, he is. He enjoys teaching very much but recognizes that he still has a lot to learn and you are one of the finest potions masters in the world, who else could continue his tutoring?” Harry said simply but Snape looked at him with suspicion.

“That’s a very Slytherin explanation. What’s the real reason?” He asked.

“Ok, I figured I would give you his reasons first so he can’t say I didn’t try. The truth is, with the exception of a few people here, you are the only person he really cares about. So naturally he wants to make sure you stay alive long enough to see your godson get married.” Harry said in an offhand manner.

“MARRIED?” The usual calm and collected man literally ‘screeched’ in shock. “Who?”

“Will you be here to see it?”

“Yes, fine, I’ll stay. Now who is he marrying?” He said without really thinking.

“Gabrielle Delacour.” Harry answered with an enormous smile. Snape could only gape at the younger man beside him. Harry always had a bit of a soft spot for the young French girl since the Tri-wizard Tournament in which he competed against her sister. She actually first came to Azkaban last year to visit Harry after two months of petitions to the Ministry for permission. Naturally she was shocked when he decided to show her that he was not as far gone as those at the Ministry believed him to be and she hasn’t left since. She started seeing Draco shortly after he was brought to the island.

Snape walked forward in a daze, not seeing nor caring where he was going. Just a short time ago he walk up the shore to free an innocent

man while he would be forced to leave one of the few people he actually cared about to die. After his first approach to the Dementors, and their abnormal strength, he had had no doubt that he had gone insane long ago. Even Albus, with his considerable mind, would be worn down with the constant presence of such dark power. He expected his godson to have been broken, as he knew he would have, but instead he finds that he is perfectly healthy, teaching children of all things and planning a wedding. When one thinks of Azkaban Prison, they do not think about healthy, children and weddings, it would simply be impossible to comprehend. The very nature of all he has seen and heard this night was absurd.

When growing up in the Snape household you are taught many lessons and told to accept certain things as fact. Among those is that purebloods are more powerful, more skilled, smarter and just plain better than everyone else. This is a belief that they make no secret of holding, however there are some that are never spoken aloud, but are taught just the same. The most predominant of these is 'Dumbledore can not be beaten.' Oh yes, even Death Eater families respect Dumbledore. They despised and cursed his name but they respected the power he had at his command. Though they all believed that they would be victorious, very few Death Eaters believed that their master could defeat Dumbledore in single combat. What Potter said made sense. With his abilities already in question, when compared to Albus', Voldemort couldn't afford another 'weak link'. Believing that he was merely caught off guard, he could launch a second, successful, assault against Azkaban and destroy whatever power forced him to retreat the first time, or acquire it for himself.

"Professor!" Harry stated as he came to a stop. Surprised at the sudden interruption of his thoughts, Snape looked up in surprise to see that they were now nearly back to where they had started, not far from the others who were waiting for him by the boat while Tonks and Bella watched them intently for any sign of hostile action.

"Well, this is where I shall leave you." Harry said as he gazed at each of the wizards before him. "Good luck, we shall not meet again." He finished in an emotionless voice as he turned and walked back towards Tonks and Bella, leaving Snape to say his good byes.

“HARRY!” Hermione yelled to get his attention as tears streamed down her face. “Why are you doing this?” She cried.

“Because, your visit here and what you have learned has only served to hurt you.” He answered without turning to face her. “And I wish to go on hurting you, and to do that, all I have to do is stay right here.” Harry could feel the gaze of nearly everyone on his back as he walked away. The only person not paying attention to Harry was Professor Dumbledore who was looking intently into the eyes of his younger colleague.

Snape for his part was facing an internal battle. On the one hand he had his obligation to the Headmaster. He had saved his life; given him the employment he needed and showed unwavering trust in him. He had actually been more of a father to him than his own had been and at the moment every available fighter was needed. But if what Potter said was true, then it was a losing battle, they could not win even if their forces were doubled.

On the other hand he had Draco. A young man that had turned to him as a mentor and surrogate guardian at a young age. Draco’s imprisonment had broken his heart and hurt him more than he would ever let on to anyone, even Dumbledore. Albus’ active role in his godson’s trial had put a strain on their relationship but he still respected and looked to him for advice and support when it was needed. He had told Potter that he would stay but now as he stood looking into the clear blue eyes of his mentor Snape found that he could not come to a decision.

Seeing the conflicting emotions in his young friend’s eyes, Dumbledore immediately understood the problem. Though he did not know of the many others that the island now housed, he did know that Harry was perfectly capable of turning it into a haven for those he wished to protect from the war’s brutality if he so desired. And when thinking of what Harry could have said to him that made such a change in the Potions Master’s demeanor he could only think of one possible answer. Harry had, in fact, offered him sanctuary. He knew that Severus has had a difficult life, especially the last few years. After Voldemort had discovered he was spying for the Order he nearly killed the younger man. It was only the timely intervention of

two squads of Aurors that saved him. With his cover blown and his inability to gather more information, many members of the Order figured that he had outlived his usefulness to the Order and should be expelled. His past as a Death Eater and his sour nature had not brought forth many friends and supporters that would intercede on his behalf. His continued arguments of Harry's innocence did not help matters any. Dumbledore had managed to quash any public 'Snape bashing' during meetings but the resentment was still there. He had lived his entire life with such cynicism and mistrust and if anyone deserved a little peace it was him.

"It is alright Severus. I understand." The old man said with a warm smile and sad eyes as he reached up to grip his shoulder in a reassuring and comforting way. "With luck, we shall see each other again in a more peaceful world."

Snape stood on the shore looking out over the black water towards the mainland for nearly a half hour after the boat and his old life drifted off into the darkness. All his life he has wanted to find a place where he could feel he belonged and could, at least to some degree, call home. For the longest time he believed that place was Hogwarts. He never thought he could find any place he would feel more comfortable and be himself. However he now knew that he had been wrong. Even out on this dark beach, with the wind tearing at his robes he felt more at peace than he ever had in the ancient school of magic. Yes, he would miss Albus and a select few others and in a way he would always feel guilty, as if he left everyone to fight and die when he could have helped but he knew that that was no longer his fight. He had been fighting for either Voldemort or Dumbledore for almost thirty years, and he was tired. He wanted nothing more than to find some peace somewhere. He found it terribly ironic that what he had been searching for nearly all his life would be found on this accursed island. He allowed himself a quiet chuckle at the irony before he heard someone clearing their throat behind him. Spinning around quickly he came eye to eye with an amused Harry Potter. Looking around he noticed that Lestrage and Tonks were no longer present so he figured they must have returned to the 'castle'.

"We have to get going or they'll start without us."

“Start what?” Snape asked Harry suspiciously.

“Considering our low population, weddings are rare so we felt we would have a party. Granted, if Draco and Gabrielle were not getting married we would simply find something else to celebrate. But I’m guessing you would like to see Draco, so let’s go.” Harry answered as he ushered Snape back towards the main gates. Upon seeing the imposing gates ahead Snape shuddered slightly when he thought of the power the Dementors guarding them had. Beside him Harry noticed his slight hesitation and placed his hand on the older man’s arm bringing him to a stop. Without saying a word Harry put his right hand on the other man’s chest and closed his eyes briefly. Confused, Snape looked down and was a bit surprised to see his hand pulsing sporadically with a soft blue glow, however he felt nothing. After a few moments Harry opened his eyes again and removed his hand.

“Let’s go.” He said with a grin and continued towards his destination with a thoroughly confused Potions Master trailing behind him. As they got closer the gates seemed to open on their own accord and Snape raised his mental defenses and braced himself for the power he knew was coming. But as he walked through the threshold it never came. He looked around in confusion only to find that the Dementors were indeed at their posts but they seemed to have no effect on him. Quickly understanding came to him. Potter had said that he made sure that Draco was resistant to the dark power a Dementor uses.

‘So, that was what he was doing.’ He thought to himself. Looking up to comment on this he was surprised to see that Harry was already on the other side of the entrance hall, moving up the stairs to what he figured must be where the ‘refugees’ lived. He sped up and caught up with Harry at the end of an ordinary looking corridor with many halls leading off in other directions. At the end stood a pair of tall imposing double doors made out of some dark stained hardwood that looked as if it would take a pair of giants weeks to batter down with their clubs.

“Alright before we go in, I have two rules that you must hear.” Harry began as he stopped just shy of the doors. Snape gave him an incredulous glare at the thought of following the rules some Gryffindor has given him. However Harry could tell that this attitude was mainly

for show. After all, he has played the part of the slimy git nearly all his life, he's not about to drop it in a single day.

"First is that if you leave this island at any time for whatever reason you are forbidden from telling anyone where you have been and who else is here. The last thing we need is for people to find out that this is some sort of sanctuary and have half the wizarding world show up on our doorstep." Snape merely nodded in agreement but was then struck with a thought.

"That may happen anyway. When Dumbledore informs the Ministry of what happened here today it won't take very long for the rest of the world to find out."

"That won't happen. Like I do with the Aurors here and those that come for inspections I also meddled with their minds." He said with a grin. "They will remember everything that happened and was said here but when speaking with others they will be unable to tell of these events. The ministry will be informed that it was indeed me that drove off Voldemort but that is as far as it will go. They will be told that when they came to release me I turned my back on them after reaching shore and left and they were unable to find me. Everyone will believe that I simply vanished. Those that know the truth will be unable to speak of it. It is much like a powerful and complicated security spell. Anyway the second rule is that if you wish to bring someone else here for whatever reason you must first check it out with Tonks. The reason for this is simple. I have no wish for anyone that will cause problems with the rest of the population by attacking them on sight or running off to the Ministry, Dumbledore or Voldemort with information about this island. Tonks will investigate anyone that is asked to come for any sign that they may choose to betray our secret and then administer Veritaserum. Do you understand?" Finding no fault in the logic of such rules Snape quickly agreed and Harry opened the doors and the sight before him made Snape's jaw drop in shock.

The room was about the size of the Great Hall of Hogwarts and looked just as magnificent. Instead of four house tables there were five long ones that ran the length of the room. There was no head table and it seemed that everyone just congregated and sat where they pleased. The ceiling was enchanted to show the night's sky but

unlike Hogwarts this one seemed to show a clear pleasant evening, probably due to the nearly constant dreary weather on the island.

Four massive fireplaces, roughly fifteen feet in length and five feet in height lined each of the side walls, spaced ten feet apart. The head of the room seemed to serve as a congregation area for milling around while waiting for meals. Several couches and armchairs were grouped together in erratic patterns that gave the area a comfortable feel to it despite the size. What surprised Snape the most however were the people he saw there. In one group in particular he saw two men he knew to be Death Eaters who were conversing in a friendly manner to a few Gryffindor graduates. It was like this throughout the hall. Members of every house at Hogwarts, Death Eaters and Aurors all associating with one another. But one man shocked him most of all.

“MOODY!” He shouted in shock as the gruff old Auror limped up to them. “YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!” This loud exclamation drew the attention of many and brought a ferial grin to the old man’s face. Many looked on in surprise at seeing Harry Potter and Severus Snape standing next to each other in a civil manner. The animosity between the two has always been public knowledge and although Snape had believed Harry to be innocent no one believed that would change.

“If you truly believed an inbred imbecile like Lestrage could get the jump on me than you are even more of a moron than I thought.” He growled in annoyance as he approached Harry. “The Weasley twins are bringing our guest up from the north dock now. They landed about the time Dumbledore left. I’m going down to the beach to make sure he didn’t leave any surveillance devices behind, I wouldn’t put it past him.” Harry just chuckled while Snape turned and watched with wide eyes as ‘Mad Eye’ marched out the door. Despite his amusement, Harry was a bit confused. Moody, although he has always been paranoid, seemed almost desperate to get out of the hall, but he shook this off.

“He’ll never change.”

“How the hell is this possible. I saw him get hit with the killing curse when Voldemort attacked Diagon Alley last year.” Snape hissed in Harry’s ear as everyone else turned back to their own conversations.

“No, you saw Rodolphus’ killing curse hit my shield just before coming into contact with him. The shield transformed the curse in to a very powerful stunner as it passed through before hitting him. To all appearances he was dead. While everyone was running around in a panic, Bella snatched him up and I placed a body double at the scene. Of course Bella did take the time to work over her husband real nice.”

“Of all the people to leave Dumbledore, I would have never suspected Moody.” Snape muttered to himself as he gazed intently out the door long after Moody had disappeared.

“Even the most loyal of friends can lose faith. It is always inspiring to read or hear tales of men and women fighting to the death in an unwinnable war but reality is much different. Granted, fighting for an unachievable goal does not make your fight any less noble, but what is the point. When you’re out matched in every way you must pick your battles. That is a lesson that Dumbledore has never learned. He would sacrifice the entire Order in this war and achieve nothing. Moody and many others know this, that is why they are here.” Harry would have continued but he was cut off by a loud squeal from the crowd

“DADDY!” Snape spun around in surprise at the loud childish voice and watched in almost morbid fascination as two young girls, who looked to be about four years old, ran to the man standing beside him. Harry grinned as he saw the two girls and bent over in time to catch them as they threw themselves into his arms.

“And how are my two princesses doing today?” He asked with a wide smile as he gazed at his daughters. To say Snape was shocked would have been an extreme understatement. He looked as if his brain had completely shut down and he was in some sort of catatonic trance.

Both girls had similar features and could ‘almost’ pass for twins. While one had strawberry blond hair and blue eyes the other had

Black glossy hair and bright green eyes. As the two girls rambled on to their father about their day and what they had done, Snape tried to figure out who the mother was. It was clear that the black haired girl was the child of Bellatrix but the other was harder to place. Did they have the same mother or... At this point Snape's thoughts went into an entirely different direction. Though he had known that Potter was involved with both women it seemed that he did not actually realize it until now.

'Lucky bastard.' He thought to himself with amusement. 'Think of the possibilities.'

"Girls, I would like you to meet someone." This seemed to pull Snape out of his thoughts as both girls and their father turned their attention to him. "This is Professor Severus Snape. Snape, I would like you to meet Anna, short for Andromeda." He said as he nodded to the blond wrapped in his left arm. "And this bundle of trouble here is Catherine.

"I do not cause trouble!" Catherine stated in an offended manner but her eyes shined with mischief.

"Yes you do." Her sister responded.

"Do not."

"Do to."

"Do not."

"Do to. If it wasn't for you, Moody wouldn't be mad at us." With this both girls eyes went wide and they tried to squirm out of Harry's arms but he held on tight. He looked deep into Anna's eyes and a surprised look passed across his face. Both girls again tried to get away, knowing they had been caught and this time they succeeded and ran from the hall. As soon as they were out of hearing range Harry burst out in to a fit of laughter having realized why Moody seemed to be in such a hurry to get outside. Snape stood off to the side for a moment in confusion until it hit him. Harry must have used some form of Legillimency.

“What did they do?” He asked with curiosity after Harry had calmed a bit. Harry turned back to his former professor with amusement shining in his eyes.

“They stole his wooden leg and used it to play fetch with a dog.” Despite his best efforts Snape could not help the smirk that began to form across his lips. “Ah, and here they are.” Looking in the direction Harry indicated he was both a little surprised and a little annoyed to see the Weasley twins coming their way. Like the Marauders, he was willing to work with them to bring down Voldemort, unknowing to everyone else he even gave them some minor assistance in their unsuccessful jail break, but he didn’t have to like them. They had caused enough trouble for him while students. They were leading a third figure he recognized as Ginny Weasley who, for some reason, had a blindfold across her eyes.

“What’s with the blindfold?” Harry asked in confusion as the approached.

“We wanted it to be a surprise. So we blindfolded ickle Gin-Gin and put a deafening charm on her.” Fred said with a grin. With a wave of his wand George removed both the blindfold and the charm. Ginny blinked several times to get used to the light but after a moment she was looking at Harry with wide eyes. She stood stock still for several moments as if trying to figure out if what she was seeing was real. As time began to drag on Harry started to worry that she may be in shock or something but then she launched herself on to him and began sobbing almost hysterically. Harry held her tightly as he rubbed her back in a soothing manner and whispered encouraging words into her ear as he saw Tonks and Bella join them and look on in understanding. Suddenly and without warning Ginny pulled away and then pulled Harry’s head down to her’s where she pretty much slammed her lips onto his. The kiss was deep, aggressive and full of passion. Too shocked to do anything else, Harry just stood there in a stupor. After a moment Ginny pulled away and had a look about her that clearly said that she could not believe she had just done that.

“WOW.” Was all Harry could say at the moment but as soon as the word passed his lips he immediately stiffened. Slowly turning in the direction of Bella and Tonks he was met with a sight that he was not

expecting. Instead of the possessive and pissed off looks he was expecting, they looked down right delighted. He stood in confusion as Bella squealed like a schoolgirl as she and Tonks rushed forward and pulled Ginny over to a secluded corner. Ginny complied with their urgings as it seemed that she did not realize that one of the women leading her was Bellatrix Lestrange. Harry, Snape and the Weasley twins continued to watch with confusion for several minutes before the answer finally came to Harry.

“Ah, shit!” He groaned drawing the attention of the others.

“What?” All three asked at once.

“That.” He answered motioning towards the three women.

“What about it?” George asked in annoyance.

“I have enough trouble with just the two of them.” He whined as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. Slowly realization dawned on the others. Snape looked as if he wanted to laugh and the Weasley twins... well the twins looked as if...

‘This is going to be a long night.’

END OF PART I

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PART II

FALL OF THE MAGICAL WORLD

By

Padfootjr24

Albus Dumbledore stood on the shore as he gazed out over the black water towards the island fortress of Azkaban where Harry Potter now reigned. In all his long years he had never felt as old as he did at that moment. In his ignorance, pride and fear, he condemned a boy he once thought of as a grandson to a life of hell.

Harry Potter was once a young man that could always be counted on to do the right thing no matter how much danger it put himself in. He was the closest thing this world had to a true knight in shining armor. At times it was hard to believe that he was truly just a boy. But that boy was gone now. To be replaced with a man that seemed to feel nothing but hatred and contempt for the world outside of his fortress walls.

The most painful fact of the whole situation was that HE had caused this change. And as a result of his negligence the wizarding world was most likely doomed to be conquered by Lord Voldemort and the one person that could stop it had no reason or desire to do so. In fact Harry seemed to be anticipating it like any Quidditch fan would anticipate seeing their favorite team play in the World Cup. Turning his sorrowful eyes to his companions his heart wrenched as he saw young Mr. Weasley trying to console his sobbing wife as he tried to contain his own tears. Remus, though, appeared to be taking Harry's rejection the hardest.

Remus sat stone still in the bow of the small rickety boat with an empty look in his eyes as he played Harry's final words to him over and over again in his head. 'Harry was right.' He thought to himself with pain and sadness. 'Lily and James would be ashamed of me.' Of course thinking of his two deceased friends brought Sirius to mind as well. It did not take much thought for him to imagine what his old friend Padfoot would do to him if he were still alive.

The look in Harry's eyes each time he looked at him made the usually calm werewolf shudder even now. As painful as it was to think about, he wished that Harry truly was guilty of the crimes charged against him. If that were the case he would be able to push Harry from his mind as he had done these past seven years, only thinking of him with anger and disappointment. But now that he knew the truth he would not be able to forget and pushing it aside would be an impossibility for him.

The sense of betrayal he had felt when Sirius had been arrested and imprisoned was great and the anger he felt was immeasurable. But Sirius had received no trial so he never got the chance to confront the man he had thought of as a brother. When the truth was finally revealed and Sirius was proven innocent he had felt extremely guilty for ever believing him capable of such crimes but he was able to find solace in the fact that he had nothing to do with his friend's fate.

With Harry, however, it was different. Like with Sirius, he had truly believed in Harry's guilt but this time there was a trial and he was an instrumental part of the prosecutions case and had fought hard for a conviction. Not only had he been stupid enough to believe Harry to be a murderer but he had betrayed him by actively working against him. During the trial he, Ron and Hermione had no problem with telling the court and the whole of the wizarding world every last thing they knew about Harry's life with the Dursley's. Information he had told them in confidence and trusted them with. Information he tried to keep from everyone else. With his life seemingly under the microscope of the wizarding world he wanted to keep the true nature of his home life to himself and they had betrayed that trust in a matter of minutes.

What was left of the Marauder's legacy was now gone and he had been one of the ones to kill it. For he truly believed Harry Potter to be dead. He was now a stranger with no ties left in the outside world. At that moment Remus wanted nothing more than to kill himself for his stupidity. Only one thing kept him from doing so. It was not because he believed he could do some good against Voldemort or because he was frightened of death. On the contrary, he would welcome it. What he was afraid of was the afterlife, if such a thing really did exist. He was afraid of confronting his old friends again and facing their anger

and disappointment for what he had done and what he had allowed to happen to Harry. And that was one meeting he was not looking forward to.

“Remus?” When the younger man did not respond for a third time Dumbledore climbed back into the boat and approached him while moving around the six released Death Eaters. “Remus?” He called again as he shook the man’s shoulders. When Remus finally looked up he was not that surprised but a little worried to see blank almost unseeing eyes staring back at him. With a sigh he picked up one of the boat’s oars and made a portkey from it. With the condition of the six Death Eaters and the possibility that Remus may be in shock, he set the portkey to take them directly to the hospital wing at Hogwarts. After several minutes of placing charms on it the portkey was finished and he waved Ron and a still sobbing Hermione over to him. It took a while but finally he managed to get everyone positioned to where they could all touch the portkey before he activated it.

From a few miles off shore a solitary man watched through a magical eye as the group vanished from the beach before he nodded in satisfaction and marched back up to the fortress of Azkaban.

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As what little sun the cloud cover allowed too break through crept into the window and shined into the man’s eyes, Severus Snape groaned loudly as a sharp pain ran through his head. Bringing his hands up he pressed them over his eyes while he tried to remember what had happened the night before. After a few moments of thought it all started to come back to him. Almost as fast as a bullet he sat straight up as the memories began flooding through his mind. He quickly regretted this when his head began pounding all the more furiously. ‘No more fire whiskey for me.’ He fell back against his pillow and damn near jumped out of his skin when he felt a slender arm drape over his bare chest. He swiftly stood up and turned to see who it was that was laying beside him but all he could see was a tangled mess of silver hair. Leaning over slowly he gently pulled the blankets down a bit as he tried to remember what he had done. He gasped loudly when he recognized the face of Narcissa Malfoy. However his shock did not last for long.

'Oh, now I remember.' He thought to himself with a self satisfying smirk. That smirk faded quickly as he thought about how he had ended up in his present location. He turned away from the sleeping woman and quietly walked over to the burning fire where he collapsed into a nearby chair and rested his head in his hands.

'What the hell have I done?' He asked himself. As Tonks had mentioned the night before, Dumbledore had gone out of his way, even broken several laws to protect him from the Ministry. And how did he repay him? He turned his back on him, that's how. Granted, his role as a spy in Voldemort's ranks had ended several years earlier but there were still some things he could do to help, wasn't there? With a heavy sigh Snape stood up and walked to the closet hoping to find something he could wear until he could find a way to get some of his own things.

When he opened the door he was greatly surprised to find all of his things that he had thought were stored in his quarters at Hogwarts. Shaking off this feeling he decided to ask Potter about it later and got dressed and took a pain relieving potion before silently leaving the room to wander around while he got his thoughts in order. Since he was pretty drunk the night before he obviously had other things on his mind other than his surroundings. But now that his head was clear he marveled at how similar the corridors of the fearsome prison were to those at Hogwarts.

Of all that was going through his mind there was one thing, or rather one person, on his mind. And that person was Harry Potter. The Harry Potter he knew when he was a student would have jumped at any opportunity to help even a complete stranger, no matter what the consequences were to himself. Now, however, he couldn't care less. For many years he believed that Potter was nothing more than some spoiled arrogant brat that simply loved all of the attention that was heaped upon him at such a young age. Now he knew better.

Even before his trial Snape knew that Potter could not possibly have committed such acts of violence. After hearing the testimony of his 'friends' and the truth about his life with his relatives, he was even more convinced while everyone else saw it as the perfect motive for

murder. He was surprised to hear that this boy he had hated for many years was no spoiled prince at all but instead was raised in much the same fashion that he was.

Before he knew it he was pulled out of his thoughts as he found his way into the main hall where the party had been the night before. Looking around he was not surprised to find it nearly empty after all of the drinking that had gone on. In fact only one other person was present.

Harry Potter sat alone at one of the long dining tables as he sipped on a cup of steaming hot coffee and read from a newspaper while he occasionally scribbled something down on a stack of parchment beside him. Despite the amount of fire whiskey he consumed during Draco and Gabrielle's engagement party he seemed to be in perfect health as he lounged carelessly back in his chair with his feet propped up on the table. Unsure if Potter wanted to be alone or not Snape turned and prepared to leave when Harry spoke up without even looking up from his paper.

"You don't have to leave, Professor. You obviously have a lot on your mind to be up at this godforsaken hour so you might as well stay and have a cup of coffee." He said in a calm and neutral tone as he brought his cup to his lips. After thinking for a moment Snape decided that he had nothing better to do so he took a seat across from Harry. Almost instantly a hot cup of tea appeared in front of him.

"How..." Snape began to ask in surprise when Harry answered.

"The house elves that work here are very talented in knowing what each given person would want. Normally it would be just like Hogwarts and they would simply send up large amounts of different dishes but when there are relatively few people in here they like to be specific. I think that since they had only served 'real food' to a small amount of Aurors and prison staff for years they got accustomed to knowing what different people would want since those people changed regularly. But that's just my theory, I don't know how they do it and I don't really care. They seem very happy with the increased work since I took over and I guess that's all that matters." He explained in an off hand manner as he continued to read.

"Well you seem none the worse for wear after last night." Snape commented absentmindedly after several minutes of silence which brought a slight grin to Harry's face.

"That's probably because I haven't gone to sleep yet. I've been in here sucking down coffee for about three hours now." He said with a chuckle. As soon as he said that, he regretted it as Snape's eye went wide. Knowing what the man was probably thinking, Harry was quick to shoot the idea down. "No, no, no, not that. The girls spent the entire night talking like old girlfriends. I was greatly surprised to see how quick Ginny warmed up to Bella though, all things considered. No, I spent most of the night trying to duck the Weasley twins and Lee Jordan. After Ginny's 'greeting' last night they found yet another good reason to experiment. Despite my standing as the most powerful wizard in history," He said with sarcasm. "They still try to use me as their primary test subject for their new prank items and charms." He finished irritably which surprised the potions master.

"With the power you now have, you can't protect yourself from a few pranks?" He asked in surprise and amusement while at the same time he was shocked at the fact that he was having a completely civil conversation with the young man.

"Professor, despite my power or the knowledge I have acquired over the last five years, I still have no feel for pranks whatsoever. Sure I can appreciate a good joke or prank but when it comes to thinking them up, I'm lost. So if I have no idea what they could possibly come up with, how am I supposed to protect myself against it? For instance, last night alone I suddenly grew a four foot long tail, found myself with the teeth of a Saber-tooth tiger, feet the size of a troll's and covered in blue fur. Granted each time I had it gone within a few minutes but damn was that uncomfortable." Despite himself Snape could not help it when the corners of his mouth suddenly quirked up into a smirk. "But it's no matter. The three of them have had plenty of time to think over the error of their ways as they spent the rest of the night on top of the south tower. I haven't decided yet if I'll let them down or send breakfast up to them." With this statement the usually stern and sour professor could not help himself as a deep bellowing laugh burst forth

from his mouth. Harry could not think if he should be surprised at this action or disturbed by the sound of it. In the end he decided on both.

“So, how is Narcissa this morning?” Harry asked in an innocent tone of voice that quickly pulled Snape out of his amusement. He merely ducked his head down and sipped his tea for a few moments before asking a question that he had been wondering about since the night before.

“Out of curiosity, is everyone here immortal like you, Tonks and Lestranger?” He asked in an offhand manner as if it did not matter much but Harry could clearly see that the man was dying to know.

“No, they aren’t. A good many of them have had the opportunity to achieve it but they have all turned it down. Immortality is an overrated concept, really. If someone chooses such a gift, though many would call it a curse, they would be forced to watch all those around them, everyone they love and care about grow old and die. Given the choice the vast majority would choose a mortal life.”

“Then why did you choose differently?”

“Because for the first time in my life I have a place where I can actually feel at home. The Dursleys certainly never made me feel welcome and wherever I went in the magical world I always felt like an outcast. I couldn’t go anywhere without everyone staring and pointing at me because of some freak occurrence that happened long before I could remember. Here, on the other hand, if people look up to me, it is because I have earned their respect through my own actions and decisions. So I intend to stay here for as long as possible. I also have the people I love most, who were also treated as outcasts, for one reason or another, to share that time with. While it’s true that I care for others here a great deal, I find the idea of spending a very long time with Bella and Tonks appealing, though they will probably drive me insane before long. And this way I will always be around to protect or guide my children when necessary.”

“Well if you can give out immortality like that so easily couldn’t you also take it away if someone chooses later on that they no longer

want it?" Snape asked with genuine curiosity. He had no interest whatsoever in living forever but he found the very idea fascinating.

"I could, but there would be side effects. Lets say for example that you were to choose such a life. One hundred years from now you decide that you no longer want it so you ask me to remove it. The moment I did your body would rapidly age one hundred years and you would most likely die within minutes from the vast amounts of pain and the physical shock. With that in mind most people would prefer to age at a normal rate. So Professor, was there anything specific on your mind when you came down?" Harry asked casually as he once again began scribbling on his parchment. Snape glanced at it with curiosity and found it to be some long and complicated calculation. Putting the parchment out of his mind he decided to seize this opportunity to get some information.

"Why exactly are you doing this, Potter?" He asked seriously as he eyed the younger man in front of him.

"This? This, as in what, exactly?"

"Well for starters, why are you hiding away from the rest of the world when you could be out there saving lives?"

"For one, I am not hiding, I have simply found a place that I can call home, where I do not have people gawking at me wherever I go or point at me and whisper like I'm some sort of walking freak show. And two, I wish to teach the wizarding world a lesson. A lesson that is long overdue." He answered honestly. For a moment Snape was shocked by his bluntness but that shock quickly turned to anger.

"You are letting countless people die out of revenge." He yelled as he stood up but Harry remained calm.

"Revenge has nothing to do with it." Harry snapped before taking a few deep breaths to calm down before he started again. "The magical world has become too complacent, fat and lazy. They look to others to do everything for them when they should be doing it themselves. Back when Voldemort was first rising to power he could have been easily stopped if they had just stood up to him. But no, they put all of

their faith in Dumbledore to do it for them, and he in turn, ignored the threat until it was too late.

“What the wizarding world needs to learn is that they cannot simply turn all their hopes to one person and expect them to do all the work for them. They need to see that they can not throw someone away over and over again and then expect them to come and pull their asses out of the fire whenever things get hot. The only reason Dumbledore, Fudge or anyone else cares about what happened to me is because of Voldemort. If it weren't for him they would all be happy to let me rot in prison till the end of days whether they found out I was innocent or not. The Ministry would surely have destroyed that evidence just to keep the public from seeing the mistakes they had made and I would have been left here. But now the situation is different. Voldemort keeps getting stronger and more and more people are joining his ranks. So what do they do, they come here to retrieve their weapon.

“Well this weapon is will decide when and where it is used. This world needs to grow up and stop acting like a bunch of children that need a parent to tell them what to do and when. Eventually, yes, I will take Voldemort out, but first the world has a few lessons to learn. And as a professor, you should know that tough lessons are often the most effective. It's sad that it has actually come to this but it is something that had to happen eventually.” As Snape listened to Harry's explanation he wanted to deny many of the things that he had said but he knew that he was right. The magical world had a really bad habit of pinning all of its hopes on a select few no matter what the circumstances. And on many of those occasions it had met with disaster.

“Well not to rehash our discussion last night but what if the Dark Lord or even Dumbledore and the Ministry attack the island while you are not here?” Snape asked seriously. This topic had been brought up the night before but was interrupted when Ron Weasley mocked Bella's skills.

“Well like I said last night, with the new wards and fortifications this place is better protected than Hogwarts ten fold. Training is also a primary concern here. Until other 'modifications' are finished and

operational we are still, theoretically, vulnerable. So everyone here is trained deeply in combat magic and defense. There are not that many people here really but by now they are without a doubt the most dangerous and vicious fighters in the magical world. So even if an attacker manages to breach the defenses they will be quickly slaughtered once they get inside. Besides the Dementors are perfectly capable of neutralizing any army. Even an army of men like Dumbledore.” Snape visibly shivered as he remembered the unnatural power he felt from the ‘enhanced’ Dementors.

“What are you working on?” Snape changed the subject as Harry began writing again. Harry looked up suddenly at the drastic change of subject before he shook off his surprise to answer.

“I’m working on a way to hide this island permanently from prying eyes.”

“All that?” Snape gasped as he pointed to the large stack of parchment. He had seen his fair share of spell calculations, even written some of his own, but none of them were even half as long.

“No, not all of it.” Harry chuckled. “Most of these are plans for ‘remodeling’ the island. The island itself is actually very large but most of it is extremely rocky and barren. I plan on changing that as well as separating the prison from the areas that we use. No matter how safe and secure it is you really don’t want children living and playing this close to hardened criminals. So I’m planning on creating another smaller island a little off shore for the prisoners to be housed, but that project is far from complete. When I get these calculations right it should take the island outside of regular time.”

“Excuse me?”

“Basically I’m making a reality parallel to this one but that’s the easy part, similar things have been done by some of the ancient mages, just not on anything of this scale. What I’m having trouble with is making alterations to my original spell that would allow people to travel back and forth at their choosing while still keeping others out. Never mind, its confusing I know but like I said when I get finished this entire area will be perfectly hidden from the outside world.” Harry

explained in an excited tone that was actually quite disturbing when you thought of how cold and almost malicious he had been the night before.

“Why not just make it unplotable?” A new voice asked. Looking up both men saw Tonks, Bella and Ginny enter the hall side by side. Snape looked at the three women curiously before he answered Ginny’s question himself.

“Making Azkaban unplotable would serve no real purpose. It would be easy enough for someone with Potter’s power but since a good many people already know where it is it would not do much good. The Fedelius Charm is an option but that would make it obvious to everyone that something is going on here and they would certainly want to know what it was. If the Dark Lord emerges victorious he will turn all his attention to figuring out what happened to the Island and the Fedelius Charm does have several theoretical weaknesses that he could exploit.” Snape explained politely which surprised all three women.

“So, Severus,” Bella began with a mischievous smirk as they sat down. “How was your night?” She asked suggestively as she wagged her eyebrows. As an answer the most unlikely thing happened. Something you would never believe if you did not see it for yourself and even then you would question your own eyes. Snape blushed. “I thought as much. You two did always have a thing for each other.” Bella giggled. Snape looked about ready to retort but could think of nothing to say so he just huffed in annoyance and sipped his tea.

“What are you reading?” Tonks asked Harry as he went back to reading his newspaper. As an answer he laid the paper down on the table where everyone could read it. It was a copy of the Daily Prophet.

Boy-Who-Lived Released From Azkaban and Disappears

Last night Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, traveled to Azkaban to release Harry Potter after new evidence was uncovered that proved our hero’s innocence. As our readers will remember, Mr. Potter was found guilty of the

brutal murders of his muggle relatives seven years ago and sentenced to life in the feared prison under the guard of the Dementors. However things did not go as planned.

While on the island, Headmaster Dumbledore made some very shocking discoveries. Five years ago when You-Know-Who attacked Azkaban, he was defeated by an unknown power and has since not returned to the island. The human guards at the prison and the investigators for the Ministry of Magic have been unable to solve this mysterious occurrence, until now. It is now known that it was Harry Potter himself that defeated You-Know-Who and a large portion of his Death Eaters single handedly.

Unfortunately, upon reaching the shore, Harry Potter told his former Headmaster and mentor to 'clean up his own mess' and promptly apparated away. It is unknown how he managed to learn to apparate while in prison much less drive off the Dark Lord five years ago from his prison cell but what is clear is that he has the power needed to defeat He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named for good and must return. As we speak the Ministry is organizing a massive search to locate young Mr. Potter and to bring him back to where he belongs. I pray that The-Boy-Who-Lived can find it in his heart to forgive those few that stood against him and help those who truly care for his wellbeing.

"Those insufferable gits." Tonks screamed as she pounded her fist on the table while Bella and Ginny nodded in agreement.

"You see Professor, this is a prime example of what I was talking about." Harry began as he waved towards the newspaper. "They want to get someone else to do their work for them, so what do they do? They take a bunch of people who would serve the people better fighting Death Eaters and they put them to work searching for someone else to do it for them. It's ridiculous really. But we're talking about Fudge here." He said in an offhand manner. As Snape read through the article he couldn't help but agree with Harry and the three women. Just a few short minutes ago he believed that Harry remaining on the sidelines until Voldemort came to him was a terrible idea but now he was not so sure.

“Well this article, although very annoying, does serve a fairly good purpose.” Bella pointed out while the others nodded. Of the five of them Snape was the only one that did not see the point and he was greatly annoyed that even the ‘Weasley girl’ seemed to understand that cryptic statement while he did not.

“And how is that?” He asked irritably. The only purpose he could see the article serving is causing those few who were actually still resisting Voldemort to lose what little hope they had left.

“You see Snape; since Harry drove him off of this island five years ago, Voldemort has avoided it like the plague. He was terrified of whatever it was that was powerful enough to defeat him and his Death Eaters so easily. Now he knows what, or rather who, it was. He also now believes that Harry is gone and there is well over one thousand Death Eaters locked away in this prison. He is going to want them back. The only question is, when is he going to come? Before, or after he defeats Dumbledore and the Ministry?” Tonks explained as she dug into her plate of eggs and bacon that had suddenly appeared before her. With his hangover the very sight of food almost made Snape sick as he quickly diverted his eyes.

“I don’t think he is going to come just yet.” Harry said. “If he comes now he will need the bulk of his forces since he has been unable to gain the support of the Dementors. He will have to drastically cut down his attacks against the Aurors to make sure he has enough men available for the campaign. Which he can’t do because it will give the Ministry time to regroup and plan defenses and counterattacks. But, this article here also shows how desperate the Ministry is. Voldemort smells blood and he won’t let up, not for a bunch of Death Eaters who have been locked away with the Dementors for an extended period of time. They would be of no use to him for some time. He will either come after he has crushed the Ministry for more manpower for when he assaults Hogwarts, or he will come immediately after taking the school so he could use it as an example.”

“What do you mean? And how do you know if he has people looking for you as well?” Ginny asked in confusion.

“If he comes after taking Hogwarts, he will likely make some big show of it since he was defeated here. He believes that I am no longer here so he will think he will have an easy time of it since he has gone through many dark rituals over the last few years to increase his power. He is now nearly fifty percent stronger than he was five years ago and he is getting stronger everyday. He thinks he will be able to just walk in and free his captured servants. He will probably make a few speeches and then have the entire fortress destroyed to show that none can stand against him. And if Voldemort is looking for me as well it isn't because he wants to kill me, well not at first. He will most likely try to recruit me and attempt to find out how I beat him before he disposes of me.”

XXX

It had been nearly two weeks since his journey to Azkaban and Albus Dumbledore had still not recovered from the verbal assault that Harry had heaped upon him. Throughout his life he had always had enemies, had always had those that would attack him from every foreseeable angle. But never had the truth been used against him in such a way. Even now Harry's words still echoed inside his head as he tried to concentrate on his duties. Despite all that had been said that night Dumbledore was still a scholar and could not help but wonder how Harry had prevented them from revealing what had really gone on that night. To say that Minister Fudge was outraged at Harry's refusal to help and disappearance was a supreme understatement. Immediately after learning that he had left, Fudge ordered a massive manhunt for the young man, an action that Dumbledore was firmly against. But Fudge, ever the self preservationist, would hear none of it. He demanded that Harry be found immediately and forced to face Voldemort.

Due to the rising tensions and the mounting threats he was forced to send his students home and close the school until the conflict was resolved one way or the other. He wasn't deluded enough to believe that he could stand against Lord Voldemort's power. There was only one that could and he made it abundantly clear that he would not help in any way. He briefly entertained the idea of tricking Voldemort into attacking Azkaban as soon as possible just to make Harry confront him but he quickly shot the idea down. If Harry learned that he had

purposely put those he cared about in danger he may very well kill Voldemort only to take his place.

Glancing over the many articles the Daily Prophet had printed in the last weeks he could only feel a sense of anger toward himself and the rest of the world. Numerous articles that portrayed Harry as some sniveling coward that would let the rest of the world suffer because of his own childish sense of betrayal. The more he read the more he came to realize that Harry's decisions were justified even though he secretly harbored some of the same thoughts viewed by the press. What right did they have to ask him for help? He was pulled out of his thoughts however when his office door burst open and a frantic Professor McGonagall burst into the room.

"What has happened?" He asked quickly as he shot out of his chair. McGonagall looked about ready to hyperventilate as tears welled up in her eyes.

"Its, its... Remus." She finally choked out as the damn busted and tears began to stream down her flushed cheeks. Dumbledore instantly went pale and left his office at a run as he headed to the hospital wing. Many professors and Order members alike were forced to literally dive out of his way as he nearly flew down the corridors. When he finally reached his destination the hospital wing doors slammed open and he was greeted with the sorrowful red face of Madam Pomfrey.

"I'm sorry Headmaster, there was nothing I could do." She sniffed as she quickly hustled her way into her office. Dumbledore's breath caught in his throat as he slowly made his way over to the bed where the body of Remus Lupin lay motionless.

"What happened?" He asked Professor McGonagall quietly when she entered the room behind him as he looked down at the pained expression that was etched into his pale face.

"He overdosed on dreamless sleep potion." She cried as she sat down heavily into a chair on the opposite side of the bed. "I knew he took Mr. Potter's rejection hard, but I didn't think he would go this far." Dumbledore could only nod in agreement as he too sat down. As they

sat in silence he tried many times to tell his deputy what had truly happened at Azkaban but every time he tried to speak nothing would come out so he simply sat there in a mournful silence.

After leaving the hospital wing, Professor Dumbledore wandered the halls of the ancient school of magic for hours as he pondered the current situation. For the first time he was forced to think that the war with Voldemort was futile. With his almost constant gain in magical power and acquisition of new allies there was no enemy that he could not crush under his boot. But Hogwarts had never fallen, and he would be damned if he would allow it to happen while he was Headmaster. For some reason he himself could not explain, he truly believed that Harry would never let Voldemort take Hogwarts.

‘He will come.’ He thought to himself with certainty.

Word spread quickly throughout the castle about Remus’ death and everyone was in a somber mood. When he eventually made it back to his office he was mildly surprised to find Ron and Hermione waiting for him. Since they had returned from Azkaban Hermione had not left their quarters and Ron was seldom seen himself. He shook off his surprise however and went to sit behind his desk.

“Was there anything that I could do for you?” He asked tiredly as he surveyed his two former students who looked tired and old beyond their years.

“We just got back from the hospital wing,” Ron began sadly as Hermione sniffed quietly. Dumbledore nodded mournfully and prompted Ron to continue. “With everything that has been happening we have not had the opportunity to speak in private and we were wondering if you could tell us if you knew how Harry has prevented us from speaking of what happened and if there was anyway around it.” He finished quickly. Upon hearing Ron’s words Dumbledore’s head shot up as he stared at the two young people in shock. For two full weeks now he has been trying to tell someone, anyone, what really happened but every time he tried to bring the subject up different words formed on his lips.

“How...”

"A couple of days ago Hermione discovered that we can discuss the matter between others that were present. But if anyone else is within earshot we can not. We even tried writing it down, using a recording charm and extracting the memory into a pensive to tell others, but none of them worked." He explained quickly.

"Harry thought of everything, didn't he?" Dumbledore mumbled quietly to himself. "To be honest, I have not the slightest clue how he managed such a feat. Even the most powerful security charms are nowhere near as effective. Even if I knew how he had achieved this, I would doubt seriously that even I could overcome his power."

"Why is he doing this?" Hermione cried loudly as she stood up and began pacing.

"Because he's acting like a spoiled brat." Ron said through clenched teeth. "He's probably waiting for us to come crawling on our knees, begging for his help as if he were some kind of god."

"And what would you do if you were in his position, Mr. Weasley?" Dumbledore asked calmly as he looked over the rims of his half moon glasses. "Rest assured that even if we had gone, crawling on our knees, as you put it, he would probably still have done nothing different. Everyone in the magical world turned against him, even his closest and most trusted friends. Then, only when things get too out of hand, we go looking for him to protect us and fight for us. When he was on trial we were all so convinced of his guilt that we purposely over looked some of our own laws and procedures because we thought they were a waste of time and money. According to the law, no minor may be convicted of such a crime without the verification that only the questioning under Veritaserum could provide. Something that could have proven his innocence was ignored simply because we did not feel like taking the time to go through set procedures that were established centuries ago.

"Since entering the magical world it seems that we have brought him nothing but pain and suffering. So, to use his own words, 'what right do we have to ask him for help?' I do not like the situation any more than either of you but you must realize that the old adage, 'forgive

and forget', only extends so far." He paused for a moment as he put his head in his hands and rubbed his face. "Harry was right, I do bare a large portion of responsibility for the troubles our world has today. For sixty years now I have done my best to deny that fact by telling myself that Voldemort chose his own path and chose what to do with his life. But it was his experiences as a child that led him astray and I am the one responsible for allowing it to happen. Soon, I'm sure, I will have to face that child again and I do not expect to survive the encounter.

"Harry grew up in much the same situation and once again I was aware of the abuse that was heaped upon him each time I sent him home for the summer. I justified this with the knowledge that while in the Dursley's care he was protected from Voldemort and his Death Eaters. I did this so that he could one day grow to rival Voldemort and destroy him. Until the Dursley's murders I didn't even think I had been making the same mistake again. But in the end I made an even greater one. The whole of the wizarding world believes Harry to be a coward or some twisted individual that is looking on with some sick pleasure as the world is destroying itself. They don't realize that the world has been burning for seven years now. Ever since we betrayed our only hope." He finished quietly as tears formed in his eyes. Ron and Hermione stood in shocked silence as they looked at their former Headmaster with dumbfounded expressions. Never once had they even heard of the powerful wizard speaking in such a hopeless manner. Given the state of things, that was not very reassuring. After several minutes Ron and Hermione shook themselves out of their stupor and returned to their chairs. Before any of them had a chance to speak up once more the fire crackling in the fireplace turned a bright neon green and Arthur Weasley tumbled out and laid face down on the carpeted floor. Ron and Hermione were on their feet immediately and rushed to his side with Dumbledore right behind them.

Turning the man over all three gasped in shock at the sight before them. The front of the Weasley patriarch's robes were scorched and covered in blood as they hung off the man in tatters. His face and arms were covered in small cuts, bruises and burns as he lay unconscious while breathing in ragged breaths.

"Come, we must get him to the hospital wing." Dumbledore said urgently as he placed a levitation charm on the man and left his office at a run with Ron and Hermione right on his heels.

"POPPY, POPPY!" Dumbledore called out loudly as he crashed through the double doors and rushed Mr. Weasley to the nearest bed. As he gently laid the man down Madam Pomfrey's office door was yanked open and the red faced nurse bustled out. It was clear from her complexion and the look in her eyes that Remus' suicide had affected her greatly, but now was not the time for such matters. Despite her grief the moment she saw Arthur she was looking every bit like the professional healer she was.

"What happened to him?" She asked urgently as she ran her wand over the prone man's body.

"We don't know. He just fell out of my office fireplace a moment ago." Dumbledore answered as he moved out of the woman's way. For nearly an hour she cast charm after charm and force fed him numerous potions that looked and smelled like they were made from some disgusting rotting plants. Ron stood off to the side holding his crying wife as he looked at his father with fear in his heart. Like everyone else that was there that fateful night, Harry's words still echoed within his mind. It was true, the Weasley family wasn't as close as it used to be. In fact it was pretty much nonexistent. There was no sense of unity and everyone seemed to want to keep to themselves. But he vowed right there that if his father made it through he would work to his dying day if necessary to repair the damage he had helped cause.

After healing all of his major wounds Madam Pomfrey began to fix the numerous minor cuts that seemed to be all over the man's body. Over each of the cuts she smeared an orange colored cream that both Ron and Hermione recognized as the same stuff she used when healing Harry's injuries after the first task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament over eight years before.

"Is he going to be alright?" Ron asked in a strained voice.

“Yes Mr. Weasley, I daresay he will be just fine after a little rest. He will probably sleep for a few hours but I want him to remain here for at least two days for observation.” She finished in a tone that left no room for arguments before making her way back to her office, leaving the others in silence.

“I had better contact Molly and apprise her of the situation. If you will excuse me.” Dumbledore said as he left the room to head back to his office. Ron sat at his father’s bedside with his wife in his arms as he thought of his mother’s reaction to such news.

Due to the almost constant arguments with Ron and Percy over the question of Harry’s guilt or innocence a great deal of tension built up in all of the Weasleys over the years. As a result the famous Weasley temper was running on high and for peace and quiet, if not safety, they stayed away from each other. For the most part the only time you saw more than one of them in a room at the same time was during meals and those were usually rushed. When the twins had disappeared after the failed attempt to free Harry things only got worse. In the end Charlie went back to Romania and Bill asked Gringotts for a transfer back to Egypt. Ginny was the only one of seven children that visited the Burrow on a regular basis but that was probably because she was ostracized by the rest of the wizarding world, thanks to Ron, and had very few friends.

The biggest change, and the hardest to handle, was the relationship between his parents. Gone was the fun loving couple that wore their love and affection for each other on their sleeves and in their place was a shadow of what they once were. Since every conversation eventually drifted towards their children and the problems that came with them, they had given up speaking to each other almost entirely.

He was pulled back to the present when Madam Pomfrey returned to check on Arthur’s progress. After running several quick observational spells she turned to Ron with a ghost of a smile.

“He should wake soon. When he does I would normally suggest that you not push him for information and give him time to regain some of his strength but taking into account the way he arrived I believe that that will be impossible, so I ask only that you ask few questions and

not push to hard. Do you understand?" She explained in a stern voice just as Molly Weasley came crashing through the doors with a stricken look on her red face as she rushed to her husbands side. Upon seeing Arthur's battered and bruised face she broke down in to tears as she collapsed into a nearby chair and took his hand in her's.

XXX

Harry Potter marched through the dark corridors that made up the bowels of the Azkaban fortress in an annoyed mood. Clutched in his hand, he carried a letter from his contact in Hogwarts and it wasn't the news he wanted. The last few years he prided himself on being able to predict how the war was going to go and what moves the different players would make. He was always right, until now. It had become a game for some of those that lived on the island, to see if they could beat him and the stakes always seemed to get stranger every time until on unspoken agreement everyone just decided that the 'winner' would simply get whatever they asked for. He wasn't annoyed that he lost or that he now had an obligation to fill, it was that this particular bet should have been easy for him to win, but no, he just had to go with the simple and direct action and now they will never let him live it down.

As he passed by cell after cell, glancing in to find Bella, an ear shattering scream echoed through the halls. Opening his mind to find the source of the screaming he was not surprised to learn who it was coming from. A prisoner who is actually one of the Dementors' favorites. Changing his direction he made his way to the cell that was currently occupied by both Bella and a prisoner that he had yet to speak with, though he had been there for several months now. For the most part Harry hadn't given the man much thought since he had little to say to him, but his confrontation with Dumbledore gave him a good idea. When he arrived he opened the cell door to find exactly what he expected. Bella standing over the beaten figure of a Death Eater. A Death Eater that happened to have a silver hand.

"Bella," He spoke up to stop her from casting another curse. "He's nearly dead already, my dear, we don't want to kill him just yet." He said in a calm voice as if he were merely reprimanding a young child for not eating all of her vegetables. Bella huffed in annoyance and

moved to lean against the wall. "Besides, I have a few words for him." He continued in a cold voice that seemed to perk Bella's spirits back up almost instantly. She watched eagerly as Harry approached Peter Pettigrew and held both hands just inches above the man's body. His hands began pulsing with a yellowish glow and Wormtail's ragged breaths slowed and came easier. After a few moments Harry stood again and stepped back as his eyes fluttered open.

"Good morning Peter." Harry said in a sickeningly sweet voice that nearly made Bella burst out in giggles. Peter shot up off the floor and looked around frantically for any possible way to escape. But he was shocked to find the only exit blocked by none other than the son of the friend he betrayed. Glancing fearfully at Bella he quickly dropped to his knees and crawled over to Harry. Obviously he thought that Harry had somehow 'saved' him from 'Lestranger'.

"Harry, thank goodness you're here. We must get out of here; we must escape before the Dark Lord comes." He whined in a pathetic voice that just grated on Harry's nerves.

"Now why would I want to do that? If I let you leave, then Bella will lose one of her playthings. I don't think I could put her through such a traumatic experience." Harry replied innocently. Peter's face now showed confusion, shock and fear, a combination that Harry didn't think anyone could pull off and he had to admit that it was quite humorous but he managed to keep a straight face. Bella, on the other hand, could no longer contain herself and nearly fell to the floor in a fit of laughter.

"You see, Peter, I now control Azkaban, so I just thought that I would pop in and say hi." He said with a sadistic grin as he squatted down to get to eye level with the rat faced man. "And don't you worry about your precious Dark Lord. I'm sure you were here last time Voldemort came for a visit, he left suddenly for some damn reason." Harry chuckled as Bellatrix smirked at the now terrified rat. This was clearly not the same Harry Potter he had contact with in the past and the look in Harry's eye terrified him more than Voldemort ever could.

"That was you?" He asked in a shaky voice. "Are you going to kill me?"

"No, I'm not going to kill you," Harry answered flatly and Peter heaved a big sigh of relief. But his relief was short lived. "I prefer to have you suffer. So I am going to keep you alive for as long as possible. As I'm sure you know, Bella here has forgotten more about dispensing pain than you or I will ever know. I've seen her work, the Cruciatus curse is child's play and I want you to experience everything she can think up. Every time she breaks you, every time your little mind snaps, I am simply going to heal you so that she can start all over again. Well, I must be going now." For a moment Peter's face showed absolute shock, whether it was because of what Harry had said or because he was allied with Bellatrix Lestrange, Harry did not know, nor did he care. His shock however quickly gave way to despair and he broke down and was basically face down on the ground blubbering like a little girl. Harry chuckled lightly to himself before standing back up and walking over to Bella. He took her by the arm and led her out of the cell but before closing the door behind him he turned back to Wormtail. "Oh, Peter, do try to enjoy yourself while you are here." He gave Peter one last smirk before leaving.

"Any particular reason why you came and interrupted my fun? Although I have to admit that what you said to him, and the fact that it was you that said it, had more of an impact than I could have hoped for." As an answer Harry merely held up the parchment that he had clutched in his hand. Bella's violet eyes immediately brightened.

"Well, what does it say?" She asked impatiently causing Harry to smirk.

"The Ministry has surrendered."

"No shit. We all knew they would, but how did it happen?"

"Well, let's see, where to begin?" He was instantly rewarded with a slap to the back of his head.

"Don't be an ass." Bella nearly shouted in frustration.

"Fine, earlier this evening Fudge called a meeting with the Wizengamot, the heads of all departments, sub-departments and

their respective underlings where he outlined a proposal for peace that was offered by Voldemort. Suprisingly, Dumbledore was the only no show. Apparently Lupin killed himself so they were not able to contact him before the meeting began. Anyway, they would all keep their lives and be able to conduct business as usual if they submit to him and fight for him should the need arise. Naturally many were not in favor of such a deal.”

“But...” Bella prompted.

“But if they were to refuse, every one of them would die. They immediately took a vote and they agreed to his terms 189-57. As soon as the vote was finished Death Eaters literally flooded into the meeting hall. All of those that voted against them were executed.” Harry explained in a tone that clearly said that he did not care. However, Bella did not seem satisfied with this explanation.

“How were they executed?” She asked in annoyance that seemed to amuse Harry.

“Oh, is that what you wanted to know?” He asked mockingly. When Bella glared at him with a look that clearly promised pain he continued. “As a show of loyalty, the Death Eaters had them execute the others themselves. From what I understand Mr. Weasley managed to escape, but all others are now dead.”

“Out of curiosity, who was executed?”

“Most notably were Amelia Bones and most of her top Aurors, Amos Diggory, Croaker of the Department of Mysteries as well as ALL of the Unspeakables, and surprisingly Ludo Bagman of Magical Games and Sports. I would have expected him to run and hide like he did when the goblins were after him but what the hell, I guess anyone can surprise you if you wait long enough.”

“HA, I told you he would make them kill each other, but no, you thought he would let his Death Eaters have all the fun.” Bella cheered. “So I win.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what is it you want?” Harry asked irritably. As an answer Bella suddenly pushed Harry against the wall and literally slammed her lips into his. Momentarily surprised by her sudden action Harry stood completely still. He was able to shake off his shock pretty quickly however and returned her affections just as deeply and with as much passion. After several moments Bella broke off the kiss and took a few steps back as she surveyed Harry hungrily.

“You know Bella, we do this quite a lot,” Harry began with amusement. “So why waste your winning bet on this?”

“I simply enjoy thinking of new reasons to do it.” She shrugged before turning back to him. “So where were we?”

“POTTER!” The unmistakable voice of Severus Snape echoed down the corridors. Harry and Bella looked up to see the fuming potions master stalking towards them as he awkwardly carried what appeared to be a fake leg by the knee. The two looked at each other in confusion for a moment before turning their attention back to Snape who had just reached them.

“Why do you have a fake leg?” Bella asked with curiosity. Snape glared at her before answering.

“IT ISN'T FAKE!” He bellowed as he let go of it and it fell to its place between his two ‘original’ legs. Harry could only think of how uncomfortable that must be, given the human anatomy in the region, if you know what I mean. Bella on the other hand could not hind her amusement and laughed hysterically at his predicament.

“Jesus Christ!” Harry swore under his breath. “Why the hell would you give yourself a third leg?” Harry asked in disguised confusion as he waited for the explanation he knew was coming.

“I DIDN'T DO THIS.” He roared. “Those two beasts you call children did this to me.”

“Why don't you just get rid of it?” Harry asked innocently as he ignored the barb at his children.

"Why didn't I think of that, why don't I just cut it off?" Snape asked with sarcasm while he glared at a giggling Bella. "Quiet Lestranger." This comment silenced Bella as she glared coldly at Snape, the look in her eyes clearly told him that he made a mistake.

"Don't ever call me by that name again."

"Then what do I call you?" He asked more boldly than he actually felt. "There are enough Potters running around as it is."

"Both of you knock it off!" Harry shouted before the situation escalated and he was forced to explain to Draco that his wife had killed his godfather. His raised voice had the desired effect and both lapsed into silence but still glared at each other. Looking at Snape's new leg carefully Harry was able to determine what spells and charms were used to create it. Even with his knowledge of how extraordinary his daughters were he was still astonished and felt a great deal of pride that they could accomplish such a feat and their young age. They would have to be punished, sure, but he was still proud nonetheless. In a matter of moments Harry had removed all magic involved and Snape, who was still glaring at Bella, almost fell on his face with the sudden shift of balance with the removal of the extra support.

After regaining his balance, Snape merely nodded stiffly at Harry and with one last look at Bella he turned and stalked back down the corridor. Bella stared after him for a moment before turning and doing the same in the opposite direction.

Harry stood there for a few moments longer before leaning back against the wall behind him and rubbing the bridge of his nose as he felt a sudden headache coming on.

"Ah shit." He sighed before straightening up and leaving the dungeons himself with his informant's letter still clutched in his hand. He needed to seriously think about all that was going on before he could reply to her and offer advice on what she should do now that Hogwarts was sure to be attacked next. Advice she will probably ignore but he should send it all the same.

XXX

Minerva McGonagall walked quickly through the deserted corridors of Hogwarts as she made her way to the Headmaster's office. She had just been going over some correspondence when Albus sent word that he needed to see her and she had a pretty good idea what that meeting would cover. Since Arthur Weasley showed up two days before she and everyone else had been literally begging Dumbledore to send everyone out of the castle so that they could try to undermine Voldemort's influence from among the general population where they could move about and operate with greater success. A plan that Dumbledore, in all his infinite wisdom, shot down. No, instead he seemed to prefer gathering all of his forces behind these walls for some sort of great last stand. For it would be just that. What everyone knew was coming was a fight that they could not possibly hope to win without the support of the Ministry which was now nearly powerless and in Voldemort's hands. So needless to say McGonagall was in a bit of a snit as she climbed the stairs to her boss' office and knocked on the door.

"Come in." The old man said from the other side of the door. When she entered she noticed that despite the situation her long time friend and colleague looked pretty sure of himself, like he knew something everyone else had overlooked.

"Minerva, thank you for coming. We must begin immediately to finalize our plans." He began as he started sifting through the papers he had scattered about on his desk. McGonagall sighed before taking a seat in front of his massive claw footed desk.

"Now, with the three hundred capable fighters we have here and with Hogwarts' strong defenses we should have no problem protecting the school for a short time. However with Voldemort's power and numbers he will eventually overwhelm us. But I think that if we can hold on for at least a few days we may have a chance."

"How do you figure that?" McGonagall asked wearily.

"Voldemort will want to crush Hogwarts as soon as possible so he will probably try to throw everything at us at once. I'm hoping that the

longer the fight goes on many more people will join our cause.” Normally McGonagall was the very picture of respect and cool logic when it came to speaking to her employer but at the moment his words were doing nothing but bring out her hotheaded Gryffindor qualities and she could not stand to listen to another word.

“For Merlin’s sake Albus,” She began screaming. “We cannot win no matter how long the fight goes on. And those people you’re HOPING will come to help fight have already shown us what they intend to do. NOTHING! Only a fool would plan a defense based around the support they are hoping to get. We can’t win this fight, plain and simple. Hogwarts WILL fall. The only thing that is left to be decided is if we are going to fall with it.”

“Hogwarts has never fallen.” Dumbledore stated firmly as he gazed at his subordinate intently. “And it never will. He won’t allow it.” This final statement confused McGonagall to no end and she was starting to have her doubts about the man’s sanity. ‘He won’t allow it.’ ‘What the hell is that supposed to mean?’ She thought to herself for a moment before the answer came to her.

“He’s not coming, Albus. I think he already made that abundantly clear when he turned his back on you.” She sighed.

“HE WILL.” He yelled out as if trying to let everyone in the area know. “He will not let this school fall into the hands of the man that killed his parents.”

“He will not. This place no longer holds any meaning to him, if it ever truly did. The only thing that concerns him now is the wellbeing of everyone on Azkaban.” She shot back and waited to see Albus’ reaction. He looked as though he were about to continue arguing like a child when his voice suddenly caught in his throat and he looked at his deputy in shock.

“What did you say?” He gasped. He stared at McGonagall in shock for some time but the hard expression on her face did not change. This entire time Dumbledore’s thoughts were a literal whirlwind as he tried to piece together how she could possibly know that Harry had not truly left Azkaban. He did not seem to notice her statement that

alluded to the possibility that there were many others in residence as well or he simply thought she was referring to only Tonks, Bellatrix and Snape. After several moments the answer came to him and his shock wore off enough to speak.

"That is why you backed off, then!" He said plainly as he looked at her with sad eyes.

"Of course." She snapped in response. "In all the time that we have worked together, have you ever known me to simply back down and let someone else force their beliefs upon me. Why would this situation be any different?" Of all the chaos that came out of Harry's imprisonment, none was more shocking and more disturbing than the rift it created between Dumbledore and McGonagall, who always seemed to see eye to eye on everything. The tension between the two grew to such a point that it was clear wands would soon be needed to settle the situation, but suddenly, and unexpectedly, McGonagall stepped back. The very few people that believed in Harry's innocence felt a great sense of betrayal when the most prominent witch that shared their beliefs decided to remain quiet.

"That is how Harry got all of his information, you were sending it to him." He stated the now obvious fact as he looked upon his friend in an accusatory way. She simply rolled her eyes at his tone but answered nonetheless.

"Yes, I was. Surprisingly, Mr. Potter would probably have approached Severus instead of me if it were not for the fact that he was in contact with You-Know-Who on a routine basis. The Dark Lord is more than capable of breaking through anyone's mental shields and Potter had not yet developed full control over his powers to place charms such as the ones that are muddling up your mind as we speak."

"Why did you not simply tell me? All of this could have been corrected long ago."

"No it couldn't." She stated coldly. "Situations such as these can never be corrected. No matter how much time and effort you put into it, it will always be there. Under normal circumstances I probably would have brought this to your attention immediately but he came to

me about a week after he discovered that you had killed Hagrid. If that had not happened, then I believe he would have helped us no matter what horrors he suffered in there. But as it is, he will not. If I had told you one of three things would have happened. One, when you showed up to speak with him, he would have killed you on the spot. Two; he would have thrown you into a cell. Or three, and the most disturbing, you would have had a confrontation such as the one you had recently and you would have immediately begun working on plans to retake Azkaban by force. At the time both the Order and the Ministry were at their strongest and you would have had no problem ignoring You-Know-Who for a short time and countless lives would have been lost. Either killed by Potter or in attacks by the Dark Lord while your attention was elsewhere. That is why I did not tell you, or anyone else. He had already come to the decision to stay out of this conflict and no force on earth was going to change his mind. Exposing him would only serve to cost needless lives. Lives that will still be lost if you insist upon remaining here.” She finished strongly as she stared into Dumbledore’s clear blue eyes. Almost immediately she could tell the man had no intention of listening to reason. In a desperate attempt to get through to the man McGonagall took out the letter that Harry had sent her earlier that afternoon and threw it down on the Headmaster’s desk.

“Read that!” She snapped loudly causing Dumbledore to actually jump a little bit before his eyes rested on the single piece of parchment. He merely stared at it for several moments as if he were afraid of what he may find if he picked it up. “READ IT!” She screamed again in anger. Obviously unnerved by his colleague’s uncharacteristic outburst, Dumbledore quickly snatched the parchment up. After taking a deep breath he looked down at the parchment and began reading.

Minerva

Thank you for the information, Ginny, Fred and George are immensely relieved that Arthur managed to escape.

Dumbledore’s head shot up immediately upon reading the names of the three Weasley children. The Weasley twins had been on the run for many years now and it was unknown how they had managed to

evade the Ministry for so long. It seems that he now had the answer. When McGonagall did nothing but gaze at him with a cool look in her eyes he lowered his gaze and continued reading.

Since the Ministry was basically crushed with no losses to his forces Voldemort's next target is sure to be Hogwarts. The Death Eaters I currently hold will be of no use to him for some time and he will want to destroy the school as soon as possible so that Dumbledore will not have time to properly prepare for him. He is likely to attack within a few days. Despite his overwhelming advantage in power and numbers he will likely try to take the school by subterfuge and stealth rather than a full frontal assault.

If I know the old man as well as I think I do, I believe he is currently gathering what is left of his allies for what will certainly be a hopeless battle. My advice to you is to get clear of Dumbledore. He will not hesitate to sacrifice every one of you for his own ends. Voldemort will take Hogwarts, it is unavoidable, and he will perish with it. Don't let him take you with him.

As I have stated before, you and Luna will always be welcome here and I encourage you to come now instead of later as you originally planned. That said, I'm sure you will ignore my advice so I know I speak for everyone else when I say that we hope we will see you when this is finished.

Harry

After reading the letter Dumbledore placed the parchment down and looked up at his deputy. Much to her annoyance he still had a great deal of determination in his eyes. Despite the obvious, he still clearly believed that Harry would come to fight. For a few moments at the beginning of their 'discussion' she began to have her doubts about the man's sanity, but now all doubts were cast aside.

"And Miss Lovegood?" He asked with a sigh.

"She knows nothing of this. She is simply one of the very few of his friends that have stood by him all this time. I am begging you Albus, do not stay here. You will only meet your doom." By this time the man

completely refused to meet her eyes and she knew that it was a lost cause. The man was obviously completely gone if he believed that they could still win. This only made her next move all the more easy.

“As you can see, Potter obviously knows you quite well, but he was wrong about me. When I first began here I took an oath to protect the students of this school, with my life if necessary. But as you know, the students are no longer here. I am not about to throw my life away because you are too stubborn to face the facts. If you wish to die, that’s your business, but you are not taking me with you.” She said coolly before snatching the letter back up and incinerating it. She stared at him with hard eyes before she turned and stormed out of the office with Dumbledore’s almost blank gaze following her every step of the way.

XXX

McGonagall was in a very foul mood as she stalked her way towards the hospital wing. She had just come from meeting the other Hogwarts professors. She did not give them any information about Harry’s whereabouts but she urged them to join her in leaving the school. Though they shared her view that the upcoming fight was hopeless they felt that their place was at the Headmaster’s side and they would not abandon him at such a perilous time.

‘FOOLS!’ She thought to herself in anger. She simply could not understand why these people were willing to throw their lives away when it would serve no purpose. She knew deep down that if Hogwarts was taken and its professors killed, Dumbledore believed they would become martyrs and hopefully inspire many others to take up the fight. However, she was not so certain. With the vast majority of the magical world doing all they can to stay out of Voldemort’s way, the destruction of Hogwarts and the deaths of the light side’s most powerful witches and wizards will only serve to give the public more reason to follow the Dark Lord’s orders. The capitulation of the Ministry certainly did nothing to help the matter any. After the impromptu staff meeting she went and picked up Luna at her quarters and made her way to the domain of Madam Pomfrey. Every one of her colleagues ignored her pleas for them to leave but there were

others that she would not give a choice. They will go willingly or she will force them.

When she reached the large double doors leading in to the hospital wing she made no pretense what so ever of being the calm voice of reason. When Hermione and Ron looked up from their spots around Arthur's bed, they could immediately tell that she was there for an important and specific reason and she would not accept anything less than absolute acceptance of whatever terms she chose to lay down. Mrs. Weasley seemed to take no notice of her entrance as she continued to watch over her sleeping husband.

"Mr. Weasley, you are to take your wife, mother and father and leave this school immediately. Take them someplace that will be safe for at least a short time." She began in a firm voice, making it clear that this was no request after the young couple joined her on the other side of the room.

"Professor Dumbledore has ordered an evacuation?" Hermione asked in a very surprised tone of voice. It was obvious that Ron shared her reaction as well. McGonagall pursed her lips in annoyance for a moment before answering.

"No, he has not. He made it quite clear that he will never simply walk away from this school. He and the other professors are remaining here. No amount of reason can convince them otherwise."

"Well then I will remain as well." Ron spoke up stubbornly. His former transfiguration professor glared at him with hard eyes for several moments, making him extremely uncomfortable, before replying with the one thing she believed would get through to even the most determined Weasley.

"Really, so you would prefer to have your defenseless father remain here to be killed in his bed. You would prefer for your wife to die here when your son is just months away from birth. More than likely, everyone here will die. Will you allow your parents, wife and child to die with them?" For a few long moments Ron's face drained of all color as he thought about the absolute joy he had felt when Hermione told him that she was pregnant. The mere thought of losing her filled

him with a deep cold in the very center of him that was hard to shake off. He looked over at his wife for a moment to see her eyes welling up with tears and it was surprisingly easy for him to change his mind. He nodded in resignation as he thought of the many people in the castle that he had gotten close to over the years and the fact that he most likely would never see them alive again.

"I take it you are leaving as well?" Hermione asked, speaking up for the first time. Her old professor simply nodded. "Where will you go?"

"I am going to pick up my grandchildren, then I am going to go stay with Severus." McGonagall's husband had died even before Harry and his friends had arrived at Hogwarts but her son and daughter-in-law were killed just a few years ago in an attack on Diagon Alley. Since then she has had custody of her three grandchildren.

Like she had done with Dumbledore, she merely stood back waited to see their reactions to her comment. Though they were deeply hurt and angered by Harry's words and actions they could not help but be impressed and admire the planning he had put into his own cover up. When answering questions for the Ministry regarding their 'visit' to Azkaban they were deeply surprised at the uncanny detail he had put into the false memories he basically forced them to tell. However the detail that shocked them the most was concerning the apparent disappearance of Severus Snape.

During their questioning they were compelled to tell the Ministry that after Harry had disappeared Snape left as well, apparently to find Harry and bring him back. Now this simple explanation is nothing spectacular except for the fact that Harry could not have possibly known that Snape would have taken him up on his offer. So he had to alter an already staggeringly complicated spell on the spot. He had done this and cast it without even Dumbledore noticing that anything was wrong. While Ron did not know the significance of this feat and Remus was too wrapped up in self pity to care, Hermione and Dumbledore were greatly disturbed that anyone had enough power to accomplish such a task on even a very small scale, much less on the level Harry had produced.

So according to public record and knowledge, Professor Snape is out running around looking for any sign of Harry but to hear McGonagall say that she was going to go stay with him made it sound as if he were remaining in one place. But how could she possibly know that he wasn't on the move and more importantly, how could she know where he was.

"How...?" Hermione couldn't even get her entire question out before she choked on her own words and lapsed back in to silence. For nearly ten minutes Ron and Hermione looked back and forth between each other and their old professor with wide shocked eyes as they tried to find the words to ask the relevant question. Finally, after a great deal of silence, McGonagall became irritated and decided to answer the unasked question, at least to an extent.

"Yes, I know about Potter and where he really is. I have actually known for a number of years now." She informed her two shocked former students a bit smugly. She could not help but rub it in their faces that she had been right and knew the truth for a great deal of time before she turned and left the hospital wing with a confused Luna at her side. As they were walking through the doors Ron and Hermione could hear McGonagall quietly telling Luna where they would be going and who would also be there.

XXX

"Now tell me, why the hell are we here?" Draco whispered to Harry quietly as they crept down an empty corridor. Harry looked at his companion in amusement for a moment before asking a question of his own.

"Why are you so nervous?" He asked with a grin. Draco obviously didn't find Harry all that funny.

"The fact that one of the most powerful wizards in the world will probably kill me on sight if he finds us here usually has that effect on most people. Couldn't you simply do this on your own instead of the two of us sneaking around like a couple of thieves?"

"Where would the fun be in that? And I don't like thinking of us as thieves, I prefer, conservationists." Harry replied with a grin after a moment's thought.

"Conservationists?" Draco asked as he stopped for a moment to think about it. "Yes, I like that much better."

"And here we are." Harry said happily as he stopped outside a pair of double doors. "I hope Madam Pince isn't expecting anyone." And with that Harry and Draco pulled the hoods of their cloaks up and stepped into the library of Hogwarts.

"Who are you?" A suspicious voice whispered as soon as they entered. Harry looked at the woman in surprise for a moment before he shook it off. Leave it to the old librarian to whisper even when there was no one else present and the possibility for attack was hanging over the whole school.

"I am who I am and I apologize for our unexpected arrival, madam, but we have come to collect a few of your lovely books." Harry said in a formal tone with an exaggerated bow that left Draco rolling his eyes. Madam Pince never took her eyes off the two men standing before her but for a moment she was having James Potter flashbacks.

"And just what books were you looking for?" It was quite clear that she had no intention of letting these men take any of her precious books unless she started getting answers and a good way of finding out at least who they were affiliated with was to find out what books they needed. For example a Death Eater would certainly want to find a book on the dark arts.

"Actually, we were intending to borrow all of them." Draco responded in a flat tone. Madam Pince looked shocked for a moment at their audacity before she came to the conclusion that they were clearly there for dark purposes before she swiftly pulled her wand and leveled it at her two visitors. Before she could blink however, Harry, with a mere twitch of his finger, summoned her wand to him.

“Now that is no way to behave in a library. I am afraid I’m going to have to deduct points.” Harry immediately flinched back a bit as Draco nudged his elbow into his ribs.

“Knock it off will you.” He said in annoyance as he looked back at the door behind them. He was obviously a bit nervous that Dumbledore would come in at any minute.

“You’re no fun, you know that.” He said to his former schoolboy enemy before turning back to the Hogwarts librarian. “I’m sure you are aware that this school will be attacked relatively soon. Unfortunately, for you and everyone else, Dumbledore is ignoring all advice and is refusing to order an evacuation.”

“What does that have to do with you being here?” The old woman snapped, probably the first time she even raised her voice in the library.

“It has everything to do with it. Voldemort will take this school and crush Dumbledore under his boot. Even the old man knows this. After he does this, he will certainly tear this place apart looking for any manuscripts that could be useful to him, all others will likely be destroyed. What we have here is the largest collection of magical knowledge in the world. It will all be gone in a few days, unless I take it. In my possession they will be kept safe and returned too this very library the same day that Voldemort is defeated.” Harry explained calmly as he watched Madam Pince intently. It was quite obvious that she knew what he was saying was true. Voldemort had no use for books and knowledge that did not help him gain more power. However she was not about to hand anything over to some unknown wizard and she certainly would not do it without Dumbledore’s approval.

“And how do I know that you are not working for the Dark Lord?”

“A very good question.” He said simply before he reached up and lowered his hood. Pince’s eyes went wide for a brief moment before rolling to the back of her head as she passed out. Harry looked surprised for a moment before he turned to Draco. “Well, this certainly makes things much easier. We won’t have anyone asking

anymore irritating questions. Lets get started, this should take awhile.” Draco nodded before walking over to a nearby table and pulling a small bag off of his belt. Harry did the same and the two emptied the bags that seemed to be filled with small wooden cubes. Draco grabbed a few of them and placed the on the floor near the potions section and with a flick of his wrist and a short incantation each cube was enlarged several times over until four rather large trunks lay at his feet. Opening one up he looked inside and nodded when he saw what appeared to be a large empty room.

“I can’t believe I’m robbing Hogwarts.” He sighed. “That should look good on a job résumé.” He chuckled to himself before waving his wand and a small row of books flew off the shelf and into the first trunk.

XXX

Snape could not believe that he found himself running through the corridors of Azkaban. Normally, from what he had heard anyway, they knew in advance when someone would be visiting the island. However a boat was about to land on the eastern shore and Potter was off the island so he could not alter the memories of those visitors and any normal memory charm could be easily detected by either Dumbledore or Voldemort. And with the fall of the Ministry it was obvious that one of those two had sent these people. Either Dumbledore to try to talk Harry into helping or Voldemort to gain the support of the Dementors in advance of an attack on Hogwarts. Their only option was to stun them and then old them until Harry returned.

As he ran past the Dementors and out the front gate he was joined by Bellatrix and the Weasley twins. Not the normal company he would prefer but he had to admit that they were well trained in the dueling arts. As they made their way to the shore line they could see the small boat approaching from the distance and they quickly took cover behind some of the large rocks that littered the beach where ‘Mad eye’ Moody was already positioned.

“Can you see who they are?” Bella asked the old Auror after she had caught her breath.

“No, they’re wearing cloaks.”

“Can’t you see through cloaks and such?” Fred asked in confusion.

“Only at close range. They will be on the beach before I can make a positive identification.” He growled in annoyance at the questions. “Just keep quiet.” Normally Snape would get into an argument with the old man for speaking to him in such a way and Belle would have certainly tried to push his buttons for her own amusement, but now wasn’t the time. So the five sat in silence as the boat was slowly pushed across the black water towards them. The five minutes they waited felt like an eternity until the boat finally settled on the shore and five figures began to climb out onto the beach about thirty feet from their position. Of the five, two appeared to be about average height while one was quite a bit taller. Two, however, looked to be fairly short. This confused Snape and the others because neither Voldemort nor Dumbledore was allied with the Goblins and there was nobody in the outside world that would bring children to Azkaban.

“Has Tonks said anything about bringing anyone else here recently?” Moody asked Bella in a fierce whisper. Bella however was at a loss as well as she silently shook her head in confusion. As the five unknown figures walked up the beach Moody looked at each one intently as his magical eye began picking up details through their cloaks. At first it was just faint outlines. Then he started seeing colors. But when the tallest of the group turned their head as if looking around at their surroundings Moody discovered exactly who it was.

“Potter lost two bets in two weeks.” Moody chuckled to himself confusing the others even more. The others simply looked at the man as if he were insane.

“What the hell are you talking about? Who is it?” Snape asked in annoyance.

“It’s Minerva.” He said simply and chuckled again at their surprised looks.

“She left Dumbledore when Voldemort could attack at anytime?” Fred asked in surprise. “So who won?” He asked suddenly. Everyone stopped to think for a moment before Snape came up with the answer.

“Nobody did. Everyone thought that she would ignore Potter’s advice and stay.”

“Damn. For now on I’m betting against Harry on everything. I’ll lose most of the time but occasionally I’ll win and it will be sweet.” George stated with a grin.

“Well now that I think about it I should have bet the other way as well. She has always been fiercely loyal to Albus but you have to remember that now she has the wellbeing of her grandchildren to think about.” Moody said as he began to stand up. He was about to step out from behind the rock when he suddenly looked back at Bella.

“You might want to go on back to the fortress. Remember she has no idea exactly who is here. If she sees you she is likely to start throwing curses.”

“Ah. Maybe you’re right. I’ll go ahead and have Bob take his men off the gates until you get them inside.” She said before running back up the beach towards the front gate.

“Bob?” Snape asked in confusion.

“Yes, well, since Dementors can’t speak English and no human can speak their language we have to give each other names to simplify it. She decided to call the clan leader Bob. From what I understand of their language they refer to Potter with the same word they use for father. Kind of disturbing if you ask me.” Moody explained before turning and making his way towards McGonagall and the rest of her group. When they came out from behind the rock they saw that she was focusing on Bella’s retreating form cautiously as she ran back to the front gates.

“Minerva.” Snape called to his former colleague as they approached. With a witch as skilled as her, you don’t want to risk sneaking up on her while she may already be on edge. And he was right. Despite the

familiar voice and the lack of hostility in his tone both McGonagall and two of the others immediately turned swiftly in their direction with their wands drawn. Upon seeing Snape they quickly lowered their wands and McGonagall was about to speak when she locked eyes with Moody. Her jaw nearly dropped to the ground and she seemed incapable of rational thought. However one of her companions was not. Slowly Luna lowered her hood and looked at the men before them.

“Good evening Professor, Mr. Moody.” She greeted the two men as if Moody had never ‘died’.

“Does anything ever surprise that girl?” Fred asked his twin.

“Apparently not my esteemed brother.”

“George, Fredrick.” She greeted the twins. The two Weasleys looked at each other and decided to have a little fun. They approached the young woman and each took one of her hands and kissed it tenderly.

“We are always pleased to see you my dear.”

“One as lovely as you is always welcome to our humble home.”

“On this dreary island, we find in you its fairest flower.”

“Oh, good line, brother mine.”

“Thank you guys.” Luna replied in her normal almost dreamy voice as a small smile lit up her face.

“Will the two of you knock it off? We do have other things to do tonight.” Moody snapped as he cuffed both Fred and George on the sides of their heads.

“Damn, you didn’t have to hit so hard.” Fred complained as he rubbed his ear where Moody’s blow had landed. At this point McGonagall seemed to come out of her shock and was now merely staring at Moody with suspicion.

“Now, Minerva, I’m sure you have an awful lot of questions but most of them are going to have to wait until Potter returns.” Snape began.

“Potter isn’t here?” She asked in confusion. She had been under the impression that he had no intention of leaving Azkaban.

“No, he isn’t. He and Draco are out looting Hogwarts at the moment.” Fred said with amusement. McGonagall seemed to take no notice of Draco’s name for the time being and asked what the hell he intended to steal from Hogwarts. So they spent a few moments explaining that they had no idea and even speculated on what it might be. After making quick introductions to her three grandchildren they were on their way to the fortress.

(As you can see I gave no details about her grandchildren and I don’t intend to. They will have no bearing on the plot and no further parts in the story. They are merely a big factor in McGonagall leaving Hogwarts.)

“Minerva, before we go in we have to explain a few things. As you were with Moody, you will be greatly surprised by many of the people you will see here. A few others are thought to be dead and many others are people you would normally turn your wand on.” Snape babbled on and it was clear that he was nervous about his colleague’s reaction. After a few moments George got annoyed and spoke up.

“We have Death Eaters living here.” He burst out in annoyance as he rolled his eyes at Snape. As they thought, she looked absolutely shocked.

“WHY WOULD POTTER ALLOW DEATH EATERS HERE?” She screamed making everyone, including Luna, flinch back.

“Well, considering that this is Azkaban, you would think that Death Eaters would be an absolute factor. But if you mean why he has accepted some of them here and protects them, it is because while he was a prisoner here he lost his prejudice against dark magic and those that use it. While he would never join Voldemort or commit the crimes he has, he has no problem taking in those that no longer wish

to serve him, whatever their reason. What you must understand professor is that we are all here for a reason. We no longer wish to serve. Granted, there are some people here that have committed some very grievous crimes, but they no longer want to live that life."

"Be that as it may, they should still be held accountable for their actions and locked up." She said strongly.

"And what about me, Minerva?" Snape asked just as strongly. "I have committed many of those same crimes. Why am I any different? Because I turned spy? I hardly think that is enough to absolve me, yet you were willing to give me a chance. The bottom line is that though the Death Eaters may respect his power, those no longer wishing to side with Voldemort will not go to Dumbledore as I did. They don't trust him. He is not above using someone and then throwing them away when they are no longer useful to him, you know that. I respect the man and look up to him as a friend and mentor but those are the facts. Potter on the other hand is willing to give these men and women a fresh start at a peaceful life. Though I spent many years trying to get him out of this prison many good things came out of him being here. Before he was sent here he was your stereotypical Gryffindor, with all the prejudices that come with it. Now, however, he holds none of that baggage and is willing to live and work with people he would normally have stayed clear of before out of habit." By this time even Luna was looking at Snape in shock over what he was saying. As he spoke it was clear that he held a great deal of respect for Harry and it surprised everyone. Not just that he held that respect but that he was willing to show it. After a great deal more talking and arguing, McGonagall decided to wait until she spoke with Harry and try to give everyone a chance.

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Harry and Draco stood in the center of the now empty Hogwarts library looking around.

"This just looks weird." Harry said as he looked at all the empty shelves that once held countless books and scrolls.

"It's a library; of course it would look weird with no books." Draco replied with a smirk. Harry shot him a dirty look but decided not to comment. After a few minutes the two had the many magical trunks shrunk down and placed back in their bags. After making sure that Madam Pince wasn't dead or something, the two crept back out into the corridor and slowly made their way towards the entrance hall.

"Can't you just apperate us out of here?" Draco asked for like the millionth time when they were passing the Great Hall. Harry sighed and was about to respond when he heard voices up ahead. Familiar voices. The two slowly approached and poked their heads around the corner. Standing in the entrance hall was Dumbledore as well as Hermione, Ron, Mrs. Weasley and a very beat up looking Mr. Weasley who was leaning on Ron for support.

"I wish I could stay, sir, but I must look after my family." Ron said quietly as he looked down at the floor as if he were afraid his former headmaster would be angry with his decision.

"I understand, Ronald. You must put your wife, and your child first." He said as he looked on at them with a kind smile. Harry and Draco looked at each other in surprise.

"Child." They both mouthed to each other before they both shuddered. That was a thought they did not need. "Granger must be pregnant." Draco concluded as they turned their attention back to the small gathering.

"This portkey will take you directly to the Burrow. Since it is still under the Fedelius charm it will be perfectly safe for you." He said as he handed Ron the portkey. Everyone gathered around as Dumbledore stepped back.

"Thank you, sir, for everything." Hermione said with tears in her eyes just before the portkey activated and they disappeared in a flash. Dumbledore sighed sadly to himself but made no indication that he planned on leaving anytime soon.

"Can't even leave like a normal thief!" Harry growled quietly in frustration.

"Conservationist!" Draco corrected without thought. Shooting the other man an annoyed glare, Harry placed a hand on his shoulder and the two vanished without a sound.

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Harry and Draco suddenly reappeared in Harry's office and Draco quickly breathed a sigh of relief at getting away from Dumbledore. It was quite clear that he was afraid of the man. A fact Harry found almost laughable. Turning around Harry found that they were not alone.

"Good evening, Professor." He said happily as he saw Professor McGonagall though he was deeply shocked that she was here. She was currently seated beside Snape on a couch as they were obviously waiting for him to return. She however was paying him no attention as her eyes were locked on Draco. Though he looked calm and composed both Harry and Snape could tell he was nervous under her scrutiny. Seeing this Harry decided to enlighten her.

"Professor, as you know, Snape was Dumbledore's informant in Voldemort's ranks. Draco was mine." He said simply as he sat down opposite his two former instructors.

"Well, I'll be leaving now. I'm sure I have a very lovely evening of getting yelled at coming, so if you would excuse me." Draco said sarcastically as he bowed out of the room and made his way back to the quarters he shared with Gabrielle. Before leaving however he once again took the small bag off of his belt and tossed it to Harry who caught it easily and placed it on his desk with the one he had been carrying.

"What are those?" Snape asked suspiciously as he eyed the two bags.

"Those', are the Hogwarts library." He answered simply with a grin. For a moment it appeared that Snape was about to swallow his tongue before he regained control over himself. McGonagall however was looking at him with a stern expression.

“And why, may I ask, did you take those books, Mr. Potter?” She asked stiffly as if she were speaking to a student that had just thrown dung bombs into the staff room.

“Would you prefer Voldemort take them?” That simple question seemed to change her whole demeanor but it was quite clear that she was still angry and Harry knew it had nothing to do with his recent trip to Hogwarts. For over an hour and a half he spoke to the two professors and afterwards McGonagall decided to stay despite the Death Eaters. She was deeply shocked, and almost had a stroke, when she learned that Bellatrix was there. Calming her down is what took up most of that time. In the end Harry had to bring Bella into the room and make both women swear a magical oath that they would stay away from each other and in no way try to harm the other. After McGonagall left, Snape showing her where she would be staying, Harry and Bella headed down to dinner.

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Dumbledore wandered the halls aimlessly at night for several days in a row as he thought about recent events. He was greatly shocked when Madam Pince found him and told him that Harry Potter had been in the school. For a few short moments he had believed that his hopes had come true and Harry had arrived to fight with them. These hopes were quickly dashed when he learned exactly what he had been doing there. The disappearance of the entire Hogwarts library seemed to confirm what everyone had been trying to tell him for weeks now. However, he would not let his school go without a fight.

As he made his way down a particularly dark corridor he began to get a very bad feeling. He tried to shake it off but it wouldn't go away. He walked passed a statue of an old crone and the feeling seemed to get much stronger. He immediately stopped and began to look around. Nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary and he was prepared to continue his walk when he glanced at the statue beside him. He was surprised to see the hump on the crone's back had been moved. Taking a closer look he could see an empty space that appeared to lead down into a tunnel. It took him some time but he was able to figure out how to close and seal the tunnel and he immediately set

out to find someone that may have known about the passage. For some reason, known only to him, he was convinced that it must have been Harry that had used the passage to get in and out of the castle without being detected. He would not even entertain the thought that it may have been someone with ill intent because if that were the case then the wards would have gone off. Unless, of course, the wards didn't extend into the tunnel and that was a possibility that he really didn't want to think about.

He moved swiftly through the winding corridors towards the teacher's quarters where he hoped to find some answers. As he made his way passed the entrance to the Ravenclaw common room he was stopped in his tracks at the sight of two motionless bodies lying in a heap on the cold stone floor. Approaching slowly he recognized one immediately as Kingsley Shacklebolt. Kneeling down to examine the bodies he realized the other was the body of Seamus Finnegan. A quick check for a pulse confirmed what he had already known. Standing up and leaving the bodies behind him Dumbledore continued his journey to the teacher's quarters at a much faster pace. They had to organize a search immediately to find those responsible and make sure that Hogwarts security had not been compromised any further.

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Down in the Entrance Hall a pair of Death Eaters intended to do a hell of a lot more than merely breach Hogwarts' security. They gingerly stepped over the bodies of three members of the Order of the Phoenix as they made their way to the massive double doors that led out on to the grounds. As they pushed the doors open they saw nothing but the blackness of night but stepped back nonetheless as if letting someone pass.

"You have done an excellent job, Weasley." A cold voice nearly hissed out seconds before Lord Voldemort seemingly appeared out of nowhere. One of the two Death Eaters bowed deeply before removing his hood to reveal the face of Percy Weasley.

"Thank you, My Lord." Voldemort and his two servants stepped over to the side of the hall where they remained in silence for a number of

moments. After about five minutes Voldemort removed his wand from his robes and with a flick of his wrist hundreds of Death Eaters appeared as if they were hidden under a very powerful invisibility charm. The Dark Lord surveyed his minions through his red eyes for a moment before he spoke up in a quiet voice.

"I want the professors alive." He said in a tone that left no room for opposition. "Kill everyone else." With that said the Death Eaters broke off and headed into several different directions while Voldemort and twenty others headed directly for the teacher's quarters.

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As Dumbledore was speaking with his fellow professors inside of Professor Flitwick's quarters the wards of Hogwarts, which were connected to the Headmaster, suddenly went off with such strength that it almost knocked him to the ground. Madam Pomfrey immediately rushed to the old man's side.

"Albus, are you alright?" She asked in concern as he looked back up with an almost frantic look in his eyes.

"Voldemort has breached the wards." He choked out. Everyone present seemed to go pale almost immediately when they heard these words. Dumbledore quickly drew his wand and charged out of the room with the other eleven members of the staff right behind him.

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All across the castle and its grounds small battles were taking place as Death Eaters swarmed over the strategic positions held by Aurors and Order members. They used surprise and vastly superior numbers to overwhelm their opponents and eventually crush them. The defenders had a great many skilled fighters and they gave as good as they got but the fight came down to simple numbers, they had more, many more. Eventually every position was taken and all the defenders were killed. A few had managed to use portkeys to escape but many others were trapped when an anti-portkey ward was suddenly erected so the vast majority fell.

The fighting itself had lasted for only a little over half an hour but in that short amount of time nearly eight hundred men and women had lost their lives. The fiercest fight was of course isolated near the teacher's quarters.

XXX

As Dumbledore and the others carefully made their way out of the long narrow corridor outside of Flitwick's quarters, they instantly came under fire as a barrage of powerful spells sped towards them at an alarming rate. Every one of them threw themselves to the ground or back around the corner just in time and the curses flew passed them and collided with a nearby wall, showering them with dust and bits of rock and rubble.

"Good evening, Albus," They heard the hissing voice of Lord Voldemort echo down the narrow corridor. "We have ourselves quite the situation, haven't we?" He said in a mocking tone as his Death Eaters snickered behind him. "Why don't you come out and play old man. If you do I will give you my word that your colleagues may live." He continued seriously yet all that answered him was silence. "This is a one time offer, you refuse it now and every one of you will die today."

Around the corner Dumbledore stood with his back to the wall with his head bowed and his eyes closed in thought. The foremost thought on his mind was that he should have listened to Minerva. He should have listened to everyone. This was a fight they had lost long ago. Seven years ago to be exact. Slowly he lifted his head and looked around at those surrounding him. He knew that every one of them would prefer to fight but if he could save them by giving up his life than he had no problem doing so. True, more than likely Voldemort would go back on his word, but there was still a fraction of a chance that he may honor it.

As he locked eyes with each of his subordinates they knew exactly what he was going to do but could not think of the proper words to object. So they all stood in silence looking back and forth at each other.

“Working with each and every one of you has been a pleasure, and it has been the greatest honor of my life to call you my friends.” He seemed to choke out. “There are many adventures remaining after this life, so perhaps we shall meet again.” Dumbledore said quietly as he straightened up and walked around the corner before anyone could object.

When he stepped out into the main corridor Voldemort’s red eyes lit up with glee. Dumbledore however grew even more anxious. It was not really anything you could see, but rather feel. And he could feel that the Dark Lord was a great deal more powerful than he had been at their last encounter. Voldemort looked his longtime enemy over for a brief moment before sneering.

“This day has been a long time coming, Dumbledore. After I dispose of you there will be no one left to stand in my way.”

“You may defeat me, Tom, but you cannot come close to matching the power Harry Potter possesses.” The Headmaster replied in a calm and even voice though he was anything but calm on the inside. Instead of becoming enraged as he usually did when someone used his real name, or mentioned Harry, Voldemort simply chuckled.

“And where is your ‘boy wonder’ now Dumbledore? By sending him to Azkaban you doomed yourself, and all those around you. He may have somehow driven me off years ago but since then I have grown stronger. All things considered, he is more likely to join me than he would to help you, don’t you think? But this is all speculative isn’t it, because he is gone, and from what I understand, he has no intention of ever returning. Eventually, I will find him, and he will join me or die, just as you are about to.”

“There are many that will not simply step aside for you, Tom. You will have Hogwarts, of that, I no longer have any doubt, but there are many symbols in this world that people think of and derive courage and determination from.” Dumbledore said as he tried to stall their duel for as long as possible.

“I suspect you are referring to Azkaban. It stands to reason, after all, at no other time and place had I been defeated so quickly. But not to

worry, soon that fortress will be nothing but dust and no one will dare question my power.” It seemed that our ‘esteemed’ Dark Lord was about to go off onto some rant about how much better he was compared to everyone else when a Death Eater ran up from behind him and bowed low as he was gasping for breath.

“My Lord, the library is missing.” The man spoke up in a shaky voice as if he were about to die, and it was quite possible that he was. Voldemort looked at the man sharply and regarded him as if he were an idiot.

“You fool, can’t you find a simple room? Weasley, go with him!” He snapped and Dumbledore’s eyes went wide in shock as Percy stepped forward and bowed. He knew that he had his differences with his family over the last few years, first over the fact that Voldemort had returned and then again over the guilt or innocence of Harry, but he had no idea that Percy would go as far as to join Voldemort.

“No, My Lord, it isn’t that. I mean everything has been removed, nothing remains.” The Death Eater explained and braced himself for his punishment. Voldemort’s pale face went bright red with rage as he turned his head slowly towards Dumbledore with hatred and loathing in his eyes. Despite himself Dumbledore had a hard time preventing himself from shivering from the look in the other man’s eyes. Without looking away from the aging headmaster, Voldemort raised his wand to his side and sent a killing curse at the kneeling Death Eater. Percy, who was standing right next to the man, smirked as he fell lifelessly to the floor.

“Weasley, take the other professors into custody.”

“I knew you wouldn’t keep your word.” Dumbledore stated in a weary tone that made Voldemort smirk.

“No, I simply said that they would live, and they shall. But with the disappearance of all of those lovely manuscripts, they are much too valuable to simply let go. They will tell me what I want to know. After all, the human body can withstand only so much pain.” He chuckled and immediately Dumbledore did something he had not done in well over a hundred years. He fired the first curse.

His curse sailed towards Voldemort at an alarming speed but the Dark Lord deflected it easily as he quickly sent three more of his own back at his adversary. As soon as this happened the other eleven Professors ran out from their place of cover and launched a torrent of spells and curses into the ranks of Death Eaters that were making their way down the corridor to apprehend them. Of all the professors the real surprises were from Flitwick and Professor Trelawney.

Professor Flitwick moved with a speed that one would not expect from a man twice his height. He weaved in between the Death Eaters so fast that a few of them had cursed their own comrades in an attempt to subdue the elusive charms master. As fast as he was, his wand was even faster, launching spell after spell in rapid secession and downing any Death Eater who was unlucky enough, or stupid enough, to get in his way. The fact that the Death Eaters were, on Voldemort's orders, purposely refraining from using any deadly curses was a disadvantage for them since the Hogwarts professors were not burdened by such restraints. On more than one occasion a professor would go down stunned only to be quickly revived by the others so the Death Eaters seemed to be making no progress, a fact that was clearly weighing on their minds causing them to make mistakes that Flitwick and the others were quick to exploit.

The normally airy, and sometimes just plain idiotic, Divination professor seemed more at home on a battlefield than she ever did in her perfume chocked tower where she 'attempted' to read the future. In this fight, however, she seemed to have at least some clairvoyance as she was able to read her opponents perfectly and predict their next moves flawlessly. But despite their obvious superior skills they were weighed down by numbers and were slowly losing ground.

While the Death Eaters had their hands full, Voldemort and Dumbledore were having an all out war of their own. Almost immediately after the fight had started, Dumbledore animated several statues that lined the walls, a tactic he found very effective over the years, only to have them blown apart with a simple wave of Voldemort's wand. The two fired curse after curse at one another but, like in the Department of Mysteries more than seven years before, Dumbledore moved with a speed and grace that was unthinkable for

a man his age. As fast as he was, however, Voldemort was faster and more accurate.

The vast majority of Dumbledore's curses missed their target and those that found their way through Voldemort's shields did not cause enough damage to the powerful Dark Lord. Though he had several wounds, Voldemort was still going strong while Dumbledore was slowing and growing careless.

After twenty minutes of constant battle, the Headmaster was almost finished and for the following twenty Voldemort merely played with him. Every one of his fellow professors had been subdued and were now being restrained as the Death Eaters cheered on their master. Despite Voldemort's order, Professors Trelawney, Sinistra, and Sprout were killed in the fight while the others had been successfully taken down, though a few Death Eaters looked very uncomfortable knowing that they would be punished for the casualties.

"You are weak old man. I can feel your power leaving you." Voldemort cackled as he paced back and forth in front of Dumbledore as he tried to pick himself up off of the floor once again. He was wheezing hard and it was plainly obvious that he was very seriously hurt. He managed to pull himself up into a sitting position and leaned against the cold stone of the wall as Voldemort looked down at him with amusement.

"Hogwarts is mine. Now every major institution in the magical world is under my control, with one exception." He sneered to his wounded enemy. Dumbledore looked up with sagging eyes but did not speak. "It has reached my ears that some now view Azkaban in much the same light as they once did Hogwarts. Before it was discovered that Potter was responsible, many believed that Azkaban was impregnable, even some of my own Death Eaters. However, today that will change. When I free my imprisoned servants I will have enough men to launch my campaign against the muggle world. And I want you to witness this before I let you die. I want your failure to be complete." With that said Voldemort lazily flicked his wand and the Headmaster was bound with thick iron ropes that bit into his many wounds.

After a good deal more gloating Voldemort had his Death Eaters levitate Dumbledore and the others out of the castle behind him. When they reached the grounds Dumbledore fought down his pain enough to notice with despair the village of Hogsmeade going up in flames.

Leaving about one hundred and fifty Death Eaters behind to hold the school from any possible counter attack, Voldemort used some strange spell that even Albus had never heard before, to transport them all to the shoreline of northwestern Scotland. Upon arriving the Hogwarts professors noticed immediately that there were many times the amount of Death Eaters present than had been at Hogwarts. There must have been a few thousand. All ready for battle it seemed. They greeted their lord enthusiastically, though they looked very apprehensive when they turned their attention towards the sea in the direction that Azkaban rested, after all, many of their fellows had met their doom on that accursed island.

And soon so would they...

TBC

PART III

THROUGH THE GATES OF HELL

By

Padfootjr24

Lord Voldemort looked out over the sea of black cloaked figures before him and almost sneered in disgust. Every one of his Death Eaters had at least once looked out over the black waters toward Azkaban and flinched in fear as the early morning sun seemed to stain the sky with blood. He loved seeing fear in the eyes of his enemies but when his servants showed fear of anything except him it filled him with rage. He had fought for nearly sixty years to achieve his goal and when this last 'stronghold' was finally crushed he would purge his ranks of all the weak and cowardly. Men like Cornelius Fudge and those other Ministry sycophants had no place in his future.

"Today we did what no force on earth has ever accomplished. For over one thousand years Hogwarts has stood strong against all opposition, but her day is now over. Where once mudbloods and muggle loving filth once held the reigns of our world's future, now purebloods, and only purebloods will be welcomed. For far too long wizarding blood has been diluted by such impurities that have made our world weak. Fools like Albus Dumbledore," He said as he gave the elderly headmaster a swift kick in ribs. "Have tried to brainwash our children into believing that they are no different than mudbloods, squibs or even muggles. Well, over the last few years we have shown the world differently. We are stronger, we are superior, and we will live in a world where we are second to no one.

"Over the last six months, every Ministry on earth has bowed to us, every major magical institution has fallen, except one. For the last five years the people of the magical world have been looking to Azkaban, as they once looked to Hogwarts. It may be a mere prison but it has become a symbol to weak minded fools who believe my power will be stopped." Voldemort stopped for a moment and anyone with eyes could see his anger was rising. "They said Hogwarts could not be taken, and at this moment my servants are patrolling its halls. They

said Dumbledore could not be defeated, and yet here he is, weak and powerless against me."

"And what of Harry Potter?" Dumbledore asked in a calm voice from his place on the ground with his fellow professors. Though they hated the boy more than anything else, every Death Eater present was asking themselves the same question and turned back to their master for his response.

"Harry Potter," The Dark Lord spat. "Is a coward. He alone is responsible for my only major defeat since I have returned and yet he hides. The boy is powerful, yes. Yes I underestimated him far too many times. But since our last meeting my power has grown considerably. When I find the little shit, his head will join all of yours," He said with an evil grin as he looked at the Hogwarts professors. "Mounted on the front gates to your beloved school."

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"That's a lot of boats." 'Mad Eye' Moody muttered to himself as he looked towards the shore from the top of the east tower of Azkaban.

"They're on their way then?" Harry asked as he stood beside the man. "How long do you think it will take them to reach the shore?"

"At the rate they're going, I would say it will take them about two hours. The winds and currents you kicked up seem to be doing their jobs very nicely. Wait, well I'll be damned. They have Albus and the others with them."

"Now why would he bring... Ah, he wants Dumbledore to see the end of this war." Harry concluded after a moment of confusion. "A smart man would have eliminated a threat like Dumbledore the first chance he got but I must admit that despite everything that has happened I'm actually kind of glad they lived through it." He said before turning around and leaving the room where Moody remained watching. Making his way back down to the lower levels of the fortress, Harry headed towards the main hall where everyone was already assembled despite the early hour. As he walked, Harry thought of everything that had happened over the last few days since Professor

McGonagall had joined them. As it happens she showed up on the very night that Draco and Gabrielle were to be married. This was one of the predominant reasons why Draco had been so nervous when they had gone on their little raid to steal the Hogwarts library, if he had not been back in time she would have certainly killed him.

The wedding itself was rather typical, he would have to say, though Harry hadn't exactly been to many. Since her father did not know of the wedding, or even where she was for that matter, Harry was honored to walk Gabrielle down the aisle while Snape stood in for best man. Both the wedding and the reception ran smoothly though there were some that drank a little more than they should have. All in all it was a good evening but it was the morning after that currently had Harry's mind occupied.

/Flashback/

After a very long night of drinking and dancing, Harry groaned as he began to wake up. It had become a very dependable routine, waking up in the morning just before dawn, but at the moment he wished to any higher power that may be around that he could just sleep a few more hours. Feeling a slight shift of weight on his left shoulder he wrapped his arm around the figure at his side and just basked in the comfort of the body next to him. Judging by the feel of the long hair he felt down his arm, it was Bella he was holding and he briefly wondered when she had curled her hair. That question nearly stopped his heart. After several long moments he managed to begin breathing again, although it came in short soft ragged gasps. Stealing away enough courage, Harry managed to pry one eye open and to his horror his fears were confirmed when he spotted a tangled mess of brilliant red hair.

It was nearly a full minute later that he managed to acquire enough brain power to open his other eye and look around to try to take stock of the situation. It seemed that he was lying in the center of his bed with both Bella and Tonks on his right side. In fact, Tonks was asleep on the very edge of the bed and was lying in a position that clearly indicated that she would end up on the floor some time soon. As amusing as Tonks and her sleeping habits could be, the majority of his attention was still being used to figure out how he got in this mess

and how he could possibly get out of it with his manhood still intact, if you know what I mean.

When he turned his eyes back to Ginny, he became instantly aware of just how serious the situation was. Ginny wasn't just laying beside him, no. She was laying beside him in all her naked glory. Despite the fact that his two wives were asleep just inches away he could not take his eyes off of her. Because of the climate on Azkaban, Tonks, Bella and even Harry had very pale skin but Ginny's was different somehow, it was almost like a soft creamy white instead of a normal healthy color. However she got her skin like that Harry didn't care because he thought it was beautiful. His eyes moved up from where the sheets covered her waist and briefly paused on her flat firm stomach before moving on. His exploration was suddenly interrupted when Ginny turned over and threw her arm across his chest while she buried her face into the nap of his neck. Surprised by the sudden movement, his brain almost shut down completely when she moved slightly and he could feel her bare breasts resting on his chest. Shooting a quick glance to his other side, he was relieved to see that the sudden movement did nothing to disturb Bella or Tonks.

'I'm dead, I'm a dead man.' He thought to himself when he imagined what their reaction was going to be when they woke up to find Ginny clinging to him. Briefly he entertained the idea of simply jumping up and running away but shot that down quickly. After much consideration he finally decided that he would simply do nothing. He would lay there and when everyone else woke up he would simply deny he knew anything. It wasn't a great plan, granted, but it was all he could come up with at the moment. He must have stayed there still as a board for nearly half an hour until Tonks began to stir. Immediately Harry's body went stiff and his breath caught in his throat as he waited for the inevitable. As he had originally predicted, Tonks' sudden movement caused her to tumble off the bed with a thump. Normally an action such as this would cause the woman to release a long string of expletives at her clumsiness but this time she merely popped back up off the floor with a grin on her face. Harry instantly clenched his eyes closed once again when he realized that, like Ginny, she was completely nude and he began fighting a losing battle with his body's reaction.

"Bella, wake up." Tonks shouted as she slapped her aunt on the top of her head. She was answered by only a single grunt as Bella simply rolled over and tried to bury herself into Harry's body. This however was a problem, for Harry at least, since wrapping her arm around Harry included wrapping it around Ginny. Harry open his eyes just in time to see Bella's fly open to be met with the sleeping face that shared her 'pillow'. However the reaction he was expecting was not the one he got. Instead of being yelled at himself, or even cursed, Bella jumped out of bed and rounded on Tonks. Despite the severity of the situation Harry was relieved that Bella at least had on a pair of pajama bottoms.

"WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?" The sheer volume of Bella's voice was enough to wake Ginny and after a short moment of confusion she gasped loudly before sitting up quickly and wrapping the blankets around her exposed body. "YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO STOP ME AFTER THREE DRINKS. YOU KNEW I WANTED TO BE IN CONTROL WHEN IT HAPPENED." Now Harry's anxiety gave way to confusion. 'What the hell is she talking about?' He thought to himself.

"Sorry, but you were having so much fun, I didn't want to spoil it." Tonks responded innocently as she grinned at her aunt.

"What is going on?" Harry finally spoke up as Tonks and Bella continued to stare at each other. At the sound of his voice both women spun around and looked at him with innocent expressions. Too innocent.

"Nothing." They both answered as one. Harry's eyes instantly narrowed in suspicion as the two began to nervously shift from foot to foot under his glare.

"What is going on?" He asked again in a firm voice as he stared the two down.

"Ok, ok, fine. We thought that if the two of you had enough drinks," Tonks began as she waved at Harry and Ginny. "Then we could, well, um, you know. Since Ginny got here we could tell that the two of you were attracted to each other and since she was obviously curious

about our relationship but we figured the two of you would never bring it up so we thought that..." She drifted off as though she had nothing else to say. The two people in question stared at the two women in shock. As hard as he tried, Harry could not understand why the two would want him to be with Ginny. Silence reigned for several minutes before Harry found the answer.

"Alright, let me see if I've got this right. You thought that the two of use wanted a 'physical' relationship with each other. The two of you, apparently were interested in such a relationship with her also. So you decided to get us drunk to instigate it. Is that about right?"

"Well, when you put it like that you make it sound like something immoral."

"If you knew that neither of us would mention it, then why didn't you simply bring up the subject yourselves?" When faced with this question both Tonks and Bella looked confused for a moment before they had the good grace to look a little guilty, though Harry wasn't sure how guilty they actually felt, if any at all.

"To be honest, we never really thought about that possibility, but wasn't this way much more fun?" Bella commented as she looked between Harry and Tonks. Harry's attention was pulled back to Ginny when he heard what sounded like a muffled whimper. At first he thought she was crying, possibly due to embarrassment of the situation, but that thought was cast aside as she lifted her head slightly and her 'whimper' became a full blown laugh. To say that Harry was surprised and confused would have been a supreme understatement.

"What could you possibly find funny about this?" He asked in annoyance. Ginny's reaction was a complete reversal of what he expected it to be, so her amusement threw him off a bit.

"I was just thinking about what Fred and George are going to do when they find out about this." She replied as she gasped for breath. Harry instantly went pale which caused all three women to crack up.

/End Flashback/

Harry had a hard time keeping the grin off of his face as he thought about that night. The following night Ginny joined them as well. Though it was a bit awkward for everyone at first, with no liquor to loosen them up, but they quickly became comfortable with each other. True to form, Fred and George could not let the opportunity to prank Harry pass, but despite a great deal of discomfort, he could not help but think that it was well worth it. In fact, the biggest worry for Harry, Tonks and Bella was the reaction their daughters would have. While it was true that the two girls were not even five years old yet, they had long ago agreed not to keep any important secrets from their children and this certainly qualified. To the great relief of all parties involved, the two seemed delighted with the news and, to Ginny's supreme embarrassment, asked when she was planning on giving them another sister since Bella and Tonks had already had one child each themselves. Snape tried to be his normal snarky self about the situation but quickly shut his mouth when Draco popped up and asked him if he knew where his mother was with an innocent look on his face. Snape's face immediately became tinted with pink and it was clear that she was once again sleeping off the night before in his bed.

However, as most things eventually do, the pranks the twins played on Harry were getting very old and he soon became very annoyed. When the two seemed to show no signs of stopping, Harry had to threaten the pranksters with giving Anna and Catherine free reign to do whatever they wanted to the two men. Both Fred and George instantly paled and quickly agreed that enough was enough. The two girls may be very young but they were natural pranksters and were VERY good at what they did. The ironic thing about it though was that many of the things they did were not intended to be pranks at all, they just turned out that way. If the two wanted to take a dog outside to play fetch and they couldn't find a stick, using Moody's peg leg seemed to be the obvious thing to use. And if a certain Potions Master banged his knee into a table and was limping, giving the man another leg seemed like a good idea. Nope, the twins wanted no part of anyone who's sense of logic worked like that. After all, whatever they could come up with when they put their minds to it was certainly bound to be much worse and much more humiliating.

As Harry walked into the main hall with a smile on his face he pushed all these thoughts out of his mind as he tried to focus on the task at hand. Walking through the doors he looked around the room and saw that everyone, or at least the vast majority of his fighters, were already present and waiting. There were about three hundred people present and most of them were armed to the teeth. The only inhabitants of Azkaban that were not present were the children, except for Catherine and Anne merely because nobody, even their parents, wanted to get on their bad side. There were several small groups of people just milling around and talking but most were simply sitting at one table or another waiting to hear what they all knew was coming. As anxious as everyone was, it was no surprise that they all became quiet when they realized that Harry had entered the room. Those standing, quickly took their seats as Harry made his way forward to the head of the hall. When he reached his destination and looked out over the crowd it was clear that they all had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to say so he didn't delay.

"As some of you might know, Hogwarts was attacked late last night and after about thirty minutes of fighting, Voldemort took the school. Now, at this moment Voldemort and nearly three thousand Death Eaters are on their way here. However, they are not coming alone. It seems that old snake face wants to gloat a bit so instead of killing them, he decided to take the Hogwarts professors captive, including Dumbledore." Surprised muttering broke out almost immediately at the news but the most common reaction was soft chuckles at Voldemort's stupidity for allowing such dangerous enemies to live just so that he could rub his victory in their faces. Not that everyone wanted Dumbledore and the others killed, of course, but he had been warned numerous times to evacuate Hogwarts so if he didn't listen to reason he would have to live with the consequences, or rather die with them.

"As you all have been told, after I deal with Voldemort I will be casting a number of spells, with the help of Bella and Severus Snape, that will make it impossible for anyone to find this island if we don't allow them to. However, the drawback is that no one can leave while the spells are active. I have been working on a way to allow everyone here to leave at will but it will take some time to complete the necessary calculations and craft the actual spell. With this in mind I

want to remind everyone here that they are free to leave at any time. It would be a simple matter of sending you back to the mainland with the professors after everything here is done. You will have the opportunity to live where you choose in a Voldemort free world."

"Do you have any idea how long it will take for you to alter the spell to allow us to pass through the shields?" Ginny asked from the front of the room, where she stood beside her twin brothers.

"It could take anywhere from two weeks, two months or two years. With a spell as complicated as this it's hard enough to make the smallest of changes, much less isolating and altering specific key components that..."

"Ok, ok, I don't need you to go into details I'll never understand. Can you make the necessary changes? Yes or no?" Ginny interrupted and rubbed the bridge of her nose as though the very thought of such technical stuff gave her a headache.

"Yes, I can."

"You see, that's all I need."

"Ok, as I said, it could be a while before anyone can leave here, so is there anyone who would like to leave now?" He asked seriously but surprisingly no one spoke up, not even any the younger people who would normally prefer to live in an area with some type of entertainment. After several minutes of silence both Fred and George stepped forward.

"I know we can't speak for everyone here, but you gave us a place to stay when we needed it the most. We've lived here for several years now and to be honest, I can't even imagine thinking of the Burrow or any other place as home any more. This is our home now and we're staying." George nodded in agreement with his twin as nods and mutters of agreement filtered through the crowd. It didn't take long before everyone agreed with the Weasley twins and decided to stay as well. Harry was more than a little surprised by the unanimous decision but was still greatly pleased by it.

"Alright," He began again after a brief pause to shake off his surprise. "As I said, Voldemort is on his way here and should reach the island in roughly two hours, so we have things to do. Bella, take your team and begin setting up the illusion charms you've been working on. Tonks, you and yours should leave for Hogwarts as soon as possible." Both women nodded sharply and made their way out of different exits with at least twenty five men and women behind each of them. Fred, George and Lee Jordan were with Tonks' group while the rest of the members of Harry's original Quidditch team, minus Oliver Wood, were with Bella.

"Everyone else please remember to be in your assigned positions within the next hour. Ginny, I would be grateful if you would make sure Anna and Catherine stay with you and out of trouble." He requested as he gazed at his two young daughters. He had no doubt that if left to their own devices they would try to involve themselves in his confrontation with Voldemort. They are, after all, his daughters and have a nasty habit of getting themselves into some kind of trouble on an almost daily basis. Ginny nodded in agreement as her lips curled into a smile and she made her way over to the two young girls. The moment she first met them she lost her heart to the two girls and enjoyed herself whenever they were around.

After going over a few more random and almost insignificant details, Harry walked from the hall and made his way towards the massive double doors that led out on to the grounds. Waiting for him there was the clan leader of the Dementors, Bob, as Bella insists on calling him, err it. Their conversation was short and to the point but it was quite clear that the dark creature was greatly looking forward to the coming conflict. Then again, if you were a being that fed off of a person's negative emotions you would feel the same.

Walking into the cool early morning air, he looked around and saw Bella's team spread out all along the base of the fortress, casting numerous illusion charms that Bella had developed with a little help from Harry. Their goal was to hide the changes of the building from Voldemort until it was too late for him to turn back. The illusion was so complete that not even Moody with his magically enhanced eye could detect any deception. After one last approving look around Harry vanished without a sound.

XXX

"Chris do this, Chris do that." A young woman muttered to herself in annoyance as she stormed out of the ward for permanent spell damage at Saint Mungo's Hospital. She was having a very bad day and it didn't look like that would change any time soon. Since the Ministry of Magic surrendered to Voldemort, security had nearly been tripled and she now found herself running errands and delivering messages more than working with the patients.

Having just finished her education at Hogwarts five months before, she was lucky to be taken on as an apprentice so early but so far it wasn't living up to her expectations. These were troubled times, after all, and she could do the most good using her knowledge and training to help the healers instead of doing chores any five year old could perform. With a huff she sat down behind the desk at the entrance to the ward and laid her wand down on the desk in front of her.

With Voldemort on the loose, no one within the hospital was taking any chances. Even when not healing wounds or summoning some potion or another, all employees kept their wands gripped tightly in their hand. Death Eaters could attack and crush the hospital any time they wanted and everyone wanted to be ready in case they happened to come while they were on duty. Looking up Chris, or rather Christine, saw the patrol of Aurors that had become so regular recently. They usually patrolled in groups of three and Chris had to regularly stop herself from rolling her eyes at the thought that three Aurors could stop an army of Death Eaters. True, their presence often made others feel more secure, but in reality so few would do little good against overwhelming odds.

After the fall of the Ministry, most of the Aurors had fled with their families, but some had stayed to fight. Many went to fight with Albus Dumbledore at Hogwarts, some came to Saint Mungo's to act as security and some even tried to start some underground groups against the Dark Lord. Most of these groups were crushed before they could even get organized. It was only a matter of time before the whole world was bowing to that monster. Thus far he had been focusing on the main power bases but once those are gone,

Hogwarts included, he will make quick work of the smaller institutions such as the hospitals and other small schools of magic.

She let out a deep sigh but her head shot back up again when she heard the sounds of curses being cast and a moment later the tell tale sound of three bodies hitting the floor. Instinctively she reached toward her desk and grabbed her wand in a vice like grip and leaned forward to peer down the empty hallway. She jumped slightly when the double doors were thrown open with a bang and a tall figure walked in. She immediately slid off her chair and crouched down behind her desk as she seemed to hug her wand to her chest. As she fought a losing battle to get her breathing under control she could hear clearly that the man was whistling some up beat tune as he walked towards her position.

While in school she got decent enough grades, but was never a great defense student so she had no illusions that she could beat someone that seemed to have beaten three highly trained Aurors in a matter of seconds. Her only chance was for him to miss her entirely. However, while she was thinking this through, she suddenly remembered the healer and the patients in the ward and came to the conclusion that she could not simply sit back and do nothing.

Realizing that she could no longer hear the whistling, she hoped that he had passed her by and she could possibly get a shot at him without him noticing. Normally she would never curse someone in the back but she felt she had no other choice. Trying to steady her breath once again, she breathed in deep before standing up and lifting her wand arm.

"Hello there!" Chris screamed in fright and jumped back. When she had stood up and turned around her face had come mere inches away from that of the intruder. When she raised her head to look at him she found him merely watching her with an amused look on his face. She could not place it at the moment but he looked very familiar to her somehow.

"Sorry to frighten you but I am looking for the Longbottoms, could you tell me where they might be." He asked her politely as if he had not just attacked a group of Aurors. As she looked at him, she never once

lowered her wand and her eyes only narrowed as she heard his question. After all, Death Eaters had killed patients on more than one occasion.

"And why should I tell you? You clearly aren't a regular visitor if you don't even know where they are." She said flatly in a suspicious tone.

"Because I intend to help them recover. I feel they have been lying in those beds quite long enough, wouldn't you agree? A little rest is just fine, but there comes a point where 'a little rest' turns into a serious case of laziness." The man answered bluntly with a small smile. Chris looked at the man as if he were crazy. He could tell instantly that she didn't believe him so with a sigh he raised his hand and lifted the hair away from his brow, revealing a very familiar scar.

When the man in front of her raised his hand, her grip on her wand tightened but she almost dropped it in shock when her eyes locked onto the famous lightening bolt scar of The-Boy-who-lived.

"Harry Potter!" She gasped out in shock.

"Indeed. I think that if I can drive off Voldemort and most of his pathetic little followers, then healing a few people will take little effort." The younger woman nodded dumbly and merely walked around her desk and led him down the hall with a shell-shocked expression on her face. As they walked down the empty corridor, Harry glanced at the girl with curiosity. She appeared to be several years younger than him so the odds of him knowing her was remote, but he could not help but think that there was something familiar about her.

"What's your name?" He finally asked as they were nearing the doors that he supposed led to the ward where Neville and his parents were looked after. Chris jumped slightly at the sudden intrusion into her thoughts and looked at Harry with blank eyes for a moment before answering.

"Christine Granger!" She answered flatly as she studied his reaction. Harry simply nodded at first as if his brain had not processed what she had said, but then he suddenly stopped in his tracks and did a double take.

"Granger?" He growled loudly with his eyes open wide.

"Yes, I believe you know my sister." She obviously said this purely for theatrics since the whole of wizarding Britain knew that Hermione was once one of Harry's best friends. Harry just stared at her in shock for several moments as he tried to figure out why Hermione had never mentioned having a sister in the five years they had been friends. When asked she told him that she had started her first year at Hogwarts when he would have been in his sixth year. Thinking this over, Harry couldn't recall Hermione ever actually talking about her family very much. He knew that her parents were dentists but that was the extent of his knowledge, he didn't even know their names. He was well aware that many squibs would go and live in the muggle world and basically cut themselves off from everything magical, sometimes even their families. Maybe Hermione had tried to do the opposite after learning that she was a witch, cut herself off from the muggle world. Or maybe she was just ashamed or embarrassed to talk about her muggle relatives around those that might judge her for her heritage. Either way, he didn't really care, it showed a serious lack of values, whatever the reason.

"So, where are we going, through there right?" Harry asked after quickly checking his watch. Not waiting for an answer, he simply began walking again, leaving the young apprentice behind him. She stood there for several moments as she debated whether or not to follow him. Despite his commanding presence she was pretty sure that he would not harm her but she could not be one hundred percent positive since she had never met the man before tonight. She was leaning heavily towards the option of just staying out of his way when she once again remembered the patients. She had sworn an oath to protect them from harm when she first began working at the hospital and she wasn't about to start going back on her word. So taking a deep breath she quickly took a few quick strides towards the doors and pushed them open.

"WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?" She screamed as she ran to the fallen body of Healer Burk. He was roughly forty years old with dark brown hair that was beginning to grow grey.

"I didn't kill him, if that is what you mean." Harry stated without even looking back in her direction as he continued to walk down the long isles of beds that were lining the walls. "He didn't want to be very cooperative, like those Aurors outside, so he decided to take a little nap. Ah, and here we are." He finished happily as he looked down at the three beds before him. Both Alice and Frank Longbottom look much the same as the last time Harry had seen them during the Christmas break of his fifth year at Hogwarts. Both of them now had completely white hair and looked a great deal older than they should, but their condition did not seem to have changed for either the better or worse. He was surprised by Neville's appearance though. Although he was not a victim of spell damage, the healers decided to put him in the same ward as his parents in the hopes that the company would help one or more of the three recover, at least partially.

As he looked down at his old friend, Harry felt a pang of sadness and pity in his heart. Neville had always been a good guy, and to see him reduced to this was hard to accept. Although, he did not feel the least bit guilty that he was now married to, and had a child with, the woman partially responsible for his condition. At the moment Neville was curled up in the fetal position while his entire body seemed to shake as if someone were violently shaking the bed under him. While his physical condition had not deteriorated to such extremes as his parents had, he now looked more like some filthy madman than the shy and sometimes awkward young man he had once known.

Shaking off such thoughts, Harry moved between the beds occupied by Neville and his father and turned to face Frank Longbottom. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Hermione's sister slowly approach him with her eyes wide as she tried to take everything in. Harry had to suppress a chuckle as he saw the look on her face. It was plain to see that the young woman was terrified of him yet she was able to push that aside for now in favor of her curiosity. Apparently after several failed attempts to revive the middle-aged healer she decided to see exactly what he planned to do. 'Not that it will do her any good.' He thought to himself with a mental smirk. If she were anything like her sister she would watch for each and every detail so that she may be able to practice what she saw and do it her self. And she will more than likely be rather upset to learn that that will be impossible.

Harry approached Neville's father first and extended his arms as he did so. Like he did with 'Wormtail', his hands began to glow with a dull yellowish light that pulsed and grew brighter the closer they came to Mr. Longbottom's body. Finally, Harry reached out and moved the older man's body so that he was now lying on his back before he placed one hand on his forehead and the other on the center of his chest. When his hands came into contact with his body the pulsing increased dramatically and the fast pace was hard to keep up with and only lasted for several minutes, though it felt like an eternity to Christine. Looking back at Frank she was surprised to see that he now appeared to be sleeping soundly and his body was much more relaxed. She looked up at Harry with amazement, shock and disbelief shining in her eyes but was unable to ask any questions as Harry turned his back on her and began the process again with Alice Longbottom. Because of the severity of their wounds and the brain damage they had suffered from the Cruciatus curse it would take a bit longer for him to work on Neville's parents than Neville himself, but after ten minutes he was finished and even Harry himself was amazed at how much better the couple looked as they rested peacefully for the first time in over twenty years.

After running a few tests on the couple, he turned towards Neville and regarded his old friend with sad eyes before stepping forward. Like he had to do with his father Harry had to reposition Neville so that the young man was laying on his back before he got to work. Unlike with his parents, Harry only had to spend a few short minutes with Neville before he was more or less healed. It would take all three of them some time to fully recover their strength after spending so long in a hospital bed. But before Harry could even think about leaving he was a bit surprised to see Neville's eyes slowly flutter open and look around wearily in confusion. That is of course before his eyes landed on Harry. For a brief moment his eyes were blank before they flared up in recognition.

"H...Hrr...arry?" He fought to croak out after a moment's thought. His voice was rough and course from years of ill use and it took every ounce of strength he had just to get the sounds out of his throat.

"Yes, it's me Neville." Harry answered quietly with a sad nod of his head.

"Day?"

"September 29, 2003." He said knowing perfectly well what the man meant. Neville closed his eyes tight for a moment in despair before they shot open again, but this time his eyes reflected surprise. Even without using Legillimency, Harry knew what he must be thinking.

"No, I am no longer a prisoner of Azkaban, although I now run the place and make it my home with a number of others. I find that the island's atmosphere keeps most people away from me and I prefer it that way after everything that has happened." Neville nodded in understanding and just then Christine returned with a glass of water for Neville who accepted it readily. Harry had taken precautions so she did not hear that he was living in the very building that once imprisoned him. After downing his entire glass of water Neville tried his hardest to sit up but Harry gently pushed him back down.

"Let me up, I'm going to go with you." He wheezed out weakly.

"I'm sorry, my friend, but where I'm going, you can't follow." Harry informed his friend kindly while he thought of what would happen if he were to come, only to run into a perfectly healthy and sane Bellatrix. Neville of course made to argue but before he could utter a word Harry pushed a bit of his magic into Neville's body and the young man almost instantly drifted off into a deep and peaceful sleep. Harry looked at him sadly for a moment before resting his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I promise you, when you wake, things will be much better." He whispered more to himself than to Neville before turning away from him.

"They should wake soon enough, though it will take all three of them some time to build their bodies back up once again, but just like any injury, they shouldn't try to push themselves too hard too fast. Their appearance should improve after a few good meals, decent rest and a little bit of exercise but as I said, they should take their time and do it right. Here," He continued as he tossed the shocked woman a small box that was held shut by a few metal clasps. After catching the box she opened it to reveal a dozen small glass vials, each was filled with a thick murky green liquid. "They should each take one full dose of

that a week for the next month. It will help them on their way to recovery. Now, if you will excuse me, I must be going." He finished and quickly walked passed the girl and back towards the door. Christine wanted to shout out for him to stop but she was at a loss for what to say. Unable to think of anything else, she asked the question that had been on her mind since Harry had shown up.

"Why did you come here? From what everyone understands, you have no desire to help anyone in our world, so why help these three?" She asked with a touch of anger at Harry's lack of action in the current crisis. Harry stopped just before reaching the doors and turned around slowly with an emotionless expression on his face.

"I helped them because Neville has always been a good man and I have heard nothing but good things about his parents. None of them simply follows blindly behind others and that will be a quality that will be much needed. After today the magical world is going to need new leaders and people worthy of being looked up to. And who the hell are you to question me?" He asked in anger himself. "I'm sure that as Hermione's sister, you have heard a great many things about me over the years. First it was talk about her best friend but suddenly it changed didn't it? Every time my name has been mentioned in the past seven years it has been spat out in contempt by everyone I thought I could count on." Harry stopped and took a few breaths to calm himself down before continuing. "Imagine, if you will, you're fifteen years old. You've just seen the closest thing to a father you've ever known killed before your eyes and you're sent home just days later to find what is left of your family butchered." This statement hit her a lot harder than normal considering her parents were slowly tortured and killed by Voldemort himself just a few short years ago. "You go into shock, who wouldn't after so many traumatic experiences piled on, one after the other. You finally come to your senses days later while you are being savagely beaten by a gang of drunken Aurors. While this is going on they taunt you with the fact that your two best friends, who you thought of as a brother and a sister, helped put you into this position. A man that you looked up to as a grandfather and mentor ignored the very laws that he helped pass because he wanted nothing more than to see you thrown away. Now tell me, have you ever been in the presence of a Dementor?" Christine now stood stiffly before him and her face looked paler than

death itself. It was not merely the words Harry was speaking but also the coldness of his voice that effected her. She was feeling both sick at the possibility of the same thing happening to her and the fear that Harry would take his anger out on her. She swiftly shook her head in the negative at his question and that brought a feral grin to Harry's face as if he liked nothing more than to discuss those dreadful creatures.

"Well, let me explain something to you. Dementors feed on a person's worst memories, not their best as everyone believes. That is why you experience these memories when one is near, they are bringing them to the surface. But you are not merely reliving these events as they happened in the past. You are experiencing them all at the same time. Every painful injury you have ever endured, every terrifying experience you have ever suffered are all pounding in your mind at the same time. The feeling is worse then the Cruciatus curse. But this happens when only one Dementor is present. More than one and the sensation is intensified greatly. I spent seven years in Azkaban where hundreds are present. Most prisoners go mad within a month of their arrival, I even went insane myself but was pulled back out. Now, tell me truthfully, if this all HAD happened to you, would you simply forgive and forget and do what everyone wanted of you? Or would you tell them to go fuck themselves?" Harry looked at the girl through narrowed eyes and sneered when she looked about ready to burst into tears. "I didn't think so. So from now on I would suggest keeping you mouth shut when you have no idea what is truly going on. Good day." He finished in a deadly voice and patted her cheek lightly before leaving the ward and apparating away the moment the doors closed behind him. Christine cringed back slightly when Harry touched her and as soon as he walked through the doors she fell to her knees and burst into tears.

XXX

After leaving Saint Mungo's, Harry apparated back to Azkaban and reappeared directly inside his own quarters and was in a pretty good mood. Lashing out at Hermione's sister wasn't nearly as gratifying as lashing out at Hermione herself but the look in the girl's eyes clearly told him that she had rethought the entire situation and had come to new conclusions. He would pay a great deal to see the next meeting

between the two sisters. Looking up with a content look on his face his jaw suddenly dropped when he was greeted by a very unexpected and not to mention amusing sight. Sitting on his desk chair in the middle of the room was one Ginny Weasley. Now normally this would not be all that unusual but it was because of the state she was in. She did not look all that happy as Catherine braided her hair in a very sloppy manner while Anna skipped in circles around the two while wearing a fluffy pink tutu and humming along happily.

They had obviously been 'playing' with Ginny for awhile since they already had her dressed up in the most hideous robe Harry had ever seen and the make-up on her face was just a few steps away from being perfect for a circus clown. Afraid that he might not get another chance at it, Harry quickly conjured up a camera and took a very good picture for the old scrapbook. His two little girls merely continued with their activities but at the sound of the camera snapping Ginny's head shot up lightening fast and sent Harry a murderous glare. He knew that she adored the two young girls but that affection obviously did not extend to playing dress up.

"I see they got you already." He commented with an amused chuckle as he banished the camera away to a safe place to prevent Ginny from destroying the film.

"Harry Potter," She began calmly with her eyes narrowed but Harry could definitely detect the steel in her voice. "You WILL hand that picture over right this instant." Harry stood there for a moment in mock thought before shaking his head.

"No, I don't think I will. If it makes you feel any better, I also have pictures of Bella and Tonks in much the same situation." He grinned.

"We also have a picture of daddy playing dress up with us." Anna spoke up as she stopped her skipping. Harry's mouth snapped shut when Ginny looked back up to him with a mischievous grin spreading across her face. 'Oh no.' Harry thought to himself. That was a look he had become very accustomed to seeing on the twins faces.

"Is that so? Well, I am certainly going to have to see that one. So, how did they talk you into playing with them?" She asked with a smug expression and twinkling eyes.

"How did they convince you?" Harry retorted. By the look on her face Harry could tell that her answer was the same as his. When those two girls get those puppy dog eyes going there is nothing that he could deny them, even if it meant doing a little cross dressing. However that ended when Bella walked in and quickly snapped a picture of it. The brief moment of amusement was broken when Tonks suddenly apparated into the center of the room. She looked like she had been knocked around a little bit but nothing serious enough to get Harry or the little girls very worried.

"Mommy, are you ok?" Anna asked as she and her sister joined Harry at her side.

"Yes, Andromeda, I am just fine." She answered softly but did a quick double take when she saw Ginny but had the good manners to turn away and hide her smirk at the younger woman's appearance. "Why don't you and Catherine go play in the other room for now?" She said after giving the two a tight hug. Both children wanted to know what happened but they knew by now that when their parents told them to leave the room they wouldn't get any answers at that time so they both merely pouted as they left.

"So how did it go?" Harry asked as soon as he heard the door click and cast the necessary silencing charms. As an answer he was greeted by the smuggest grin he had ever seen. And that's pretty good considering he had a lot of experience with them from Snape and Malfoy.

"Oh, it was just perfect." She said in a sing song voice as she plopped herself down in a nearby chair. "While I was leading my team to pick off all of the patrolling Death Eaters in the corridors and offices, Fred and George got to test their new fireworks on a 'target audience' in the Great Hall. Most of them were in there celebrating their 'great victory'. Leave it to simple minded Death Eaters to let their guard down so quickly. Anyway, it appears that the twins 'accidentally' made the damn things a bit more powerful then we intended."

"How much more powerful?" Ginny asked curiously. She of course remembered the fireworks they had set off during their escape from Professor Umbridge during their seventh year and they had caused a lot of damage. But having only been on Azkaban a short while she has been unable to see all of their newer inventions.

"Well they certainly won't be having any feasts in there for quite some time, I can tell you. I didn't see it myself but I certainly felt the blast on the other side of the school. Apparently many of the Ass Kissers were killed quickly and those that managed to make it out of the Hall were picked off quite easily when they rushed through the doors."

"So, are they all dead?" You could hear quite clearly that he didn't care either way but he felt the question had to be asked. Tonks however seemed to take offense at the question.

"What do I look like, a butcher?" She snapped in mock anger as she sat up straight in her chair. "We captured two." She pointed out with a grin as she leaned back to get comfortable again. Harry chuckled to himself before he turned his attention to another matter.

'Bella'He said as he projected his thoughts beyond his quarters. He did not have to wait long for a reply.

'What? And how many times do I have to tell you how weird this is?'

'How are things going?'He asked, ignoring the sarcastic question.

'Going? Things are going fine. At the moment, I am enjoying a delicious ham and turkey sandwich while I watch Snape and Malfoy amuse themselves with some pointless argument about some ridiculous poison.'

'So everything is ready?'

'Yep, all illusions are in place and I must say that I did a fairly good job in constructing that spell.'

'Bella, modesty does not become you.'

"You're right, I did an absolutely brilliant job on that spell. Oh, also the house elves have already returned with enough food and supplies to keep us stocked up for a very long time. Which is a good thing since it looks like Voldemort will get here sooner than Moody thought. We have about twenty minutes.'

'Well that is more than enough time. I was actually thinking that he could have pushed those boats on faster but apparently he isn't as strong as he likes to think he is.'

'Yeah, whatever. Now if you don't mind, I would like to get back to my sandwich.'

'Alright, I'll be down in a few minutes.' He informed the woman before turning his attention back to Tonks and Ginny.

"It seems Voldemort will be here in twenty minutes so we must get ready. How is your team? Any serious injuries?" He asked. Tonks took a moment to think before replying.

"Nothing too serious, we took the Death Eaters by complete surprise so they didn't put up much of a fight. There may be two or three that will be unable to take part in our little 'exercise' but the rest are in perfect form."

"Good, let's go. Ginny, make sure Catherine and Anna do not leave these rooms. The windows are going to be blacked out until everything is over. I don't want them to see or hear what is going on out there." Ginny nodded resolutely and kissed Harry before he and Tonks left the room.

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"Mr. Potter, I assure you that despite my age I can still handle myself very well in a fight!" McGonagall snapped with an offended look on her face when Harry told her that she would be remaining inside during the 'confrontation'.

"Of that I have no doubt. But as good as you are, my people are better. Anyone of these men and women are perfectly capable of defeating many Death Eaters on their own. They have trained extensively to fight together and have had our tactics and strategies hammered into them, you have not. That is why you, Narcissa and Snape will remain inside." Harry said in a tone that brooked no opposition before he marched off leaving McGonagall in a huff.

"Well, aren't you going to say anything?" She screamed at Snape who had remained silent through the whole argument.

"No, I don't think I will. I took the liberty of watching some of these people train and I must say that Potter was right."

"Right about what?"

"The morning after I first arrived he told me that these people were 'without a doubt the most dangerous and vicious fighters in the magical world'. I believe those were his exact words, but either way, they have been trained very well."

"So you're just going to sit around and do nothing while this is going on?"

"Of course not!" Snape snapped and looked at his former co-worker as if she were some first year Gryffindor that just botched a simple potion.

"Well, what are you going to do then?" She asked impatiently, eager to find some way to help during the attack.

"I'm going to go find the best spot to watch." He informed her calmly and she was once again left standing watching someone's retreating back in shock as he walked off in search of a place with a great view with Narcissa at his side. After a few quick moments she made up her mind and quickly set off after them.

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Voldemort looked up to the looming fortress of Azkaban with a sneer on his lips as his boats approached the shore. The sight of his greatest defeat will soon be nothing more than a pile of rubble and none will dare stand in his way now. He cast contemptuous glares at his many servants who shivered in fear. Their fear annoyed him but what angered him greatly was the slight pang of fear he himself had felt when the fortress first came into view.

Dumbledore, however, was very excited despite the severity of his wounds. His colleagues were extremely nervous and the look in their employer's eyes did not help matters any. They clearly thought with his age, combined with his wounds, he had gone a little mad. After all, why would anyone in their position be excited about the prospect of a long and tortuous death. Then again, if they had the same information that he himself had, then they would probably be a bit excited as well. Albus was greatly looking forward to this confrontation. Luckily for them, Voldemort's attention was directed ahead of them so he did not see the Headmaster. The look on his face would have surely brought the Dark Lord's anger down upon them all and that was something they all wanted to postpone for as long as possible.

It was only a short time later when three hundred long wooden boats ground against the rocky beaches of Azkaban. The Death Eaters climbed out quickly and assembled on the beach, waiting for instructions. Voldemort turned and ordered his servants to bring the Hogwarts professors ashore. The wizards were quick to follow his orders and roughly pulled their captives out of the boats and threw them to the ground. All of them seemed to be resigned to their fate, except Professor Flitwick who continued to struggle. In the end the Death Eaters had to bind him in iron ropes to keep him from lashing out at them as they approached. He may be less than half their size but he could still pack a hell of a punch. The only other notable reaction came from Dumbledore. But unlike his feisty little colleague, he seemed to have no energy what so ever. The pain and added pressure from his numerous wounds were beating down on him and he found that he could no longer stand on his own, a fact that Voldemort took great pleasure in seeing.

Surprisingly, once everyone was assembled before him, Voldemort did not take the time to gloat or even preach about the superiority of

pure bloods. Instead he merely gave a few quick orders and then began leading his Death Eaters off the beach and towards the fortress. The Death Eaters took great pleasure in cursing the professors as they walked and even took a few shots at Professor Flitwick who was still bound and being levitated along the way. Dumbledore was also being levitated but due to Voldemort's orders no one harmed him. The Dark Lord knew the old man was dying and he wanted the fall of Azkaban to be the last thing he saw before his body gave out on him.

As Lord Voldemort neared the fortress, his eyes set in determination, he suddenly came to an abrupt halt when he saw the main gates opening wide. The Death Eaters behind him all stopped as well and quickly drew their wands in anticipation of a surprise attack from any remaining Aurors. But no attack came. After nearly a full minute three black cloaked figures appeared in the gateway and slowly began making their way across the rocky grounds. Dumbledore's head immediately snapped up with a slight grin across his lips as he winked at his nervous colleagues. As the seconds ticked by the Death eaters began to grow nervous though their master remained calm as he surveyed the three figures with curiosity. Through the connection of the Dark Mark he could tell that they were not among his Death Eaters but they simply reeked of Dark Magic. When they were a mere thirty yards away they suddenly stopped and made no other move for some time.

Despite his curiosity the Dark Lord was enraged by the fact that an entire army of his servants appeared to be wary of three individuals, not to mention the fact that they were currently standing in his way. He was preparing to simply blast the trio out of his way when one took a step forward. After a brief moment the person shifted into a more relaxed position and turned their head towards the annoyed Dark Lord.

"Lord Voldemort," The man began softly though the power in his voice was obvious. "I am here to negotiate your withdrawal from my island."

"YOUR ISLAND!" Voldemort roared with rage. He was not about to let this man believe he was the one in the position of power here.

"Yes, MY island. Did you not wonder why the Dementors refused to reenter your service? You will leave, and take your army with you or everyone of you will die today." The man said this so calmly as if he knew it were fact and that just infuriated Voldemort all the more. In one swift movement he drew his wand and leveled it at the man's chest.

"AVEDA KEDAVRA!" He roared with his anger fueling his magic. His wand buckled slightly as the sickly green burst of energy shot forward and cleared the distance at an alarming rate. Voldemort had a smug smile on his face as he saw the man did not have the time to move out of the way. He was preparing to kill his companions and merely step over their bodies when he received the shock of his life. As his curse neared impact the unknown man lazily raised his hand and seemed to actually 'catch' the killing curse. He seemed to hold the energy in his outstretched hand for a moment before closing his fist and extinguishing it's light. The Death Eaters were obviously terrified at such a display of power as were the Hogwarts professors. Frightened, they glanced at the Headmaster and saw an absolutely delighted look on his face. One look at him and the professors knew that he had been expecting this which was comforting, sort of. But they were still at a loss at who the man could be.

"KILL HIM!" The Dark Lord ordered after he himself had shaken off his shock. The Death Eaters closest to him were quick to follow his command and immediately sent their own killing curses at the man. With twenty four speeding curses baring down on him, the man quickly burst into action. He took two swift steps forward before going down to one knee and throwing his arms outstretched. Seconds later each curse slammed into an inky black shield that held the curses in place as if they had simply stopped. Unseen by the Death Eaters, the man clenched his teeth in pain as he threw his hands forward. Instantly the shield disappeared and all twenty four curses shot forward, back towards their casters. Most of them were so shocked to dodge in time but those that were failed no better since their curses followed them and each hit its mark. To his credit, Voldemort did not even flinch as three sailed right past his head. Whether this was due to courage, stupidity, or insanity no one knew but it was probably a combination of the three. By now Voldemort was well past the stage

of being shocked, he was just out right furious. All his life he sought to control such power but had yet to achieve it and he knew of only one person that could come close to matching him.

“POTTER!” He screamed in rage as spit shot out from his mouth as if he were some rabid dog. Each Death Eater heard the name and wanted nothing more than to turn and run. The professors were feeling much the same. They had no desire to face the young man they had all betrayed, especially if he held that much power.

“Hello, Tom, I see you are well.” Harry greeted as he stood back up and removed the hood of his cloak. “I must say that your negotiation tactics leave much to be desired. We haven’t even gotten down to business yet and you have already lost some of your followers.”

“Don’t you dare mock me, boy. I will see to it that you die a slow and painful death...”

“Idle threats, Tom. And if I were you I would be more polite, if I wished to kill you, I could have done it at any time. You would do well to remember that. But as I said before, I am here for a negotiation, so why don’t we get to it shall we. But first...” Harry raised his right hand and concentrated hard for a moment. Everyone could feel the waves of power rolling off of him and it was very intimidating to say the least. Seconds later Voldemort spun around at the sounds of panicked shouting from behind him. What he saw made his eyes go wide. Two massive shield walls had risen up from with his ranks effectively dividing his forces into three large groups. There were nearly fifteen hundred Death Eaters in between the two walls with Harry with the rest divided on either side. The shields themselves were transparent with slight tint of gold. Death Eaters all around were throwing curses at the shields, but as of yet nothing had gotten through.

“As it stood, I didn’t like the odds. I’m good, but I would rather not have to keep my eye on three thousand people for the time being. I’m sure you understand.” Harry explained in that same all knowing tone Dumbledore used so often to annoy people. The Dark Lord glared murderously at him for a moment before his more rational and Slytherin side took over. Deep down he knew that he could not match the power that the boy had already displayed so that left him with the

choice of collecting all the information he possibly could before the confrontation escalated once again.

"If this were a negotiation as you say, then clearly you are prepared to offer something in return for pulling back." He stated with his snakelike eyes narrowed. The boy was way to confident for his own good.

"I think leaving here with your life is a fair trade, wouldn't you agree?"

"You insolent whelp, your hatred for me is great, so if you were confident you could destroy me and my Death Eaters you would have done so already. You clearly have your doubts. If you believe I will turn and leave simply on your threat, you are sadly mistaken. Negotiations do work both ways. If I can guarantee no harm will come to this island, what guarantees do I receive in return?"

"Such as?" Harry asked in an intrigued tone.

"As I have stated, you have great power, but if I am to leave your little pile of rubble alone, what assurances do I have that you will not seek power over my territories?" He asked smoothly though he did not know that he was playing right into Harry's hands. Harry made a show of thinking for a moment before he answered.

"The answer to that question is rather obvious. If I wanted your territory, I would have taken it already. I have no interest in the outside world or I would have gotten involved in your pathetic little war a long time ago. But, if it's assurances you want, then that is what you shall receive." With that, he glanced back behind him at his two companions. "Would you mind joining us?" He asked with a grin. The two nodded and stepped forward. When they reached Harry's side he looked out over the Death Eaters with a wide grin. His eyes lingered on his former teachers even longer, he was going to enjoy their reactions to a certain someone.

"I'm sure every one of you has known at least one of these young ladies, at least by reputation. Ladies, if you will?" A collective gasp of shock went out through the crowd at the sight of Bella. Dumbledore looked sad for a moment while Professor Flitwick was squeaking in

shock from his position on the ground where he was still bound and gagged. But by far the most interesting and amusing reaction was that of Voldemort. His normally pale features began to turn red with rage at the betrayal of one he held so close. Of all of his Death Eaters, it was Bella alone that he could count on to never waver in their mission. And now here she was, standing along side Potter. The smirk on her face only seemed to enrage him further.

"You seem rather upset at this turn of events, Tom." Harry said mockingly. "But here's an idea. As a show of good faith, I will allow you one killing curse that I will not block nor deflect. That is unless..." What Harry said was never heard because Voldemort was beside himself with rage that his incantation was so loud that it seemed like he was under the sonorous charm. Everyone waited for the woman to collapse to the ground in a heap but it never happened. When the curse slammed into her chest the green glow encompassed her body for only a few moments but in that time Bella let loose a short but intense scream of pain. When the glow had subsided Bella slumped slightly on to Tonks who had rushed to her side. Her body was shaking slightly and she was gasping for breath, but most importantly, she was still very much alive. No one seemed able to tear their wide eyes off of the woman as their mouths hung open in shock. Seeing the terrifying Lord Voldemort with his snakelike face with such an expression was absolutely hilarious despite the situation.

'Are you going to be alright?' Harry sent this thought to her in a worried tone as he looked at her intently with both his eyes and his magic to make sure that no serious harm was done.

'I'm fine. His curse is no where near as powerful as yours, but it still hurts just the same. But I am getting much better at blocking it out.' Even in her mind her tone clearly showed Harry how hard it was for her to focus through the pain. It took everything Harry had not to rush to her side and envelope her in a comforting embrace. But from experience, he knew that she would be alright again in a matter of minutes so he focused on the task at hand.

"Tom, as you can see, for Bella and also for Tonks, the killing curse is now nothing more than a minor inconvenience. You asked me for assurances, so I will offer you one. You take your Death Eaters and

leave Azkaban and never return, and in exchange I will give to you what you have sought for most of your life. Immortality!" By now even Dumbledore had gone deathly pale. This was clearly not going the way he had expected it would and he certainly didn't expect Harry to offer the Dark Lord eternal life.

"I can gain that power on my own, Potter, I am nearly there now. You will have to do much better than that to save this place." Now Voldemort was bluffing, and Harry knew it. 'But he hid it well' Harry mused to himself. When he spoke again his voice carried a VERY dangerous edge to it.

"Don't try to play me for a fool, Tom. It may appear that we have each other over the same barrel, but it just appears that way. You are no closer to immortality than you were twenty years ago. While it is true that a killing curse will only rob you of your body, destroying a mere spirit will require little effort for someone of my power. We both know that what I have just offered you is something you will NEVER be able to achieve on your own. You will either accept this offer, or you will die, it is as simple as that." Harry finished as he looked his old nemesis square in the eye. Voldemort for his part was fuming at the lack of respect he was receiving but was somehow able to keep his temper under control, at least for the moment. He thought long and hard about both the situation he was currently in and about Potter's offer. He would never admit it out loud but the little brat was right. His research and tests towards gaining immortality had reached an impasse and he was unable to continue forward on his own.

Everyone looked on with baited breath as the Dark Lord stood quietly in thought while mulling over the offer. The Death Eaters, though terrified of him, could not help but look on to Harry with a little awe. After all, it isn't everyday that you come across someone that seems to be able to hand out eternal life to anyone they please. The Hogwarts professors, however, were a different story. They had all gone pale and were terrified at the new levels of cruelty Voldemort would undoubtedly exhibit once he had no reason to fear death any longer. By now Bella seemed to have shaken off most of the pain she was in and was watching the Dark Lord intently with great satisfaction.

Thinking very hard about the situation, Voldemort could find no fault in Potter's bargain. Under normal circumstances he would have attacked immediately but with his army divided by an unknown shield he was not very confident that he could overcome his opponent's power. Deep inside he knew that the boy spoke the truth, he could kill him at any moment if that is what he wished, so there was no real strategic reason to lie only to turn on him later. But being a very guarded and mistrustful person he did not accept immediately. Everyone watched for nearly twenty minutes in shocked silence as Harry waited patiently for the older man's answer.

"All right, Potter, you have a deal." Voldemort finally spoke up. In the end he had decided to accept and then use his newly acquired immortality to help him defeat Harry Potter once and for all. After all, he couldn't afford to have his Death Eaters see their master talked down to in such a way from this mere boy without seeking some type of retribution, it sets a bad example. Though their expressions remained neutral, Harry, Bella and Tonks were cheering loudly on the inside at the Big Bad Dark Lord's gullibility and stupidity.

"Very well, you have agreed that despite your campaign in the rest of the world, Azkaban will remain solely under my control. In exchange I will not involve myself in the affairs of the outside world, as well as grant to you the power of immortality. Are these the terms you have agreed to?" After an extended moment he only received a sharp nod of the head as a response and Harry's eyes grew hard once again. "Do you agree? Say the words, Tom." Voldemort's eyes narrowed in rage for a brief moment.

"By my magic, I, Lord Voldemort, hereby bind myself to the terms and agreements negotiated with one Harry James Potter. Should this agreement be broken, my magic will be forfeit and be returned to the earth from whence it came." The fact that the Dark Lord had used his fictional name did not go unnoticed by Harry, or anyone else for that matter. He used the name Voldemort either because he did not want to speak his muggle father's name in front of his Death Eaters or because since that was not his true name the magical oath was not valid. Harry privately suspected that it was actually both reasons. Voldemort watched Harry intently for any sign that he had noticed

and understood the deception but the little brat gave no outward indication that he had.

“Good, I’m glad we could come to an understanding here. I’ll admit that the terrain around here isn’t much to look at, but a couple thousand dead bodies scattered about certainly wouldn’t do it any favors. So, now we will proceed.” Professor Dumbledore had slowly raised his head back up from the ground to witness what was taking place. The idea both frightened and sickened him but it was something that he believed would be utterly fascinating to witness. And he wasn’t disappointed.

The old headmaster had lifted his head just in time to see Harry slowly raise his right hand with his palm pointing directly at Lord Voldemort. He had his eyes closed and appeared to be in deep concentration. After what felt like an eternity, but had in fact been only two minutes, a small shimmering blue orb emerged from the palm of his hand. It was about the size of a muggle golfball and appeared to be made up of pure energy. The orb itself glistened like it was made of highly polished glass while small thin bolts of electric blue lightening danced over its entire surface. Once it had left his hand it slowly made its way across the ten foot gap between Harry and Voldemort. Everyone present could feel the power emanating from the thing and it was more than a little disconcerting. As Voldemort was its target, he felt much more than anyone else and as it grew nearer he became even more nervous. At one point he tried to back up a few steps but he quickly found that for some reason he could no longer move either his arms or his legs. While the seconds ticked by Harry maintained his concentration as small beads of sweat broke out on the Dark Lord’s face and his hands became clammy. When the orb was mere inches away Voldemort closed his eyes tightly and tried to shield his mind from the incredible power that was saturating the area.

The crazed killer felt as if he would have a heart attack when he felt the object gently bump into his chest one, two, three times before it stopped. Confused, Voldemort cracked open his eyes and looked down just in time to see the orb regain its motion and push forward to slam into his chest. He let out an explosive gasp as an intense pain flared up throughout his entire body. Almost immediately, the man

crashed down to his knees as he gasped continuously as he bit down on the inside of his cheeks to keep from crying out in pain. He had not felt pain like this since he was in the service of Lord Grindlewald's Black Guard and had displeased him in whatever fashion. And even then it was nothing on this scale. He would certainly learn to enjoy the Cruciatus curse before he went through something like that again. Those among the Death Eaters that had relaxed slightly since the 'negotiations' began quickly raised their wands again but were unsure of what to do or even what was going on with their master.

Seconds turned into minutes and finally after twelve minutes Voldemort was able to get himself under control and struggled to stand up once again. If it had been anyone else, someone may have helped him to his feet but Harry, Bella and Tonks had no great urge to help him and his Death Eaters would have surely been punished greatly if they had had the 'audacity' to believe that he needed their help. It was not long before Voldemort was able to get his body under control and turned his rage filled eyes back to Harry. Harry would never admit it out loud but he was slightly impressed. Though he hated the man greatly, he had to admit that he handled extreme pain very well. Voldemort's thin lipped mouth opened slightly and Harry knew he was about to go off onto some kind of rant so he decided to cut it off.

"Tonks, I think now would be a good time for a demonstration. So, if you will?" He asked politely as he grinned evilly at the young woman in a manner that no one else could see. She responded with a grin of her own before drawing her wand and sending a quick killing curse in the Dark Lord's direction. For an old man of seventy years old, he was pretty fast and very nimble and he was able to dodge her curse easily. Feeling his anger rising to new peaks he prepared to retaliate but when he raised his wand and spoke the incantation he was stunned and confused when nothing happened. His momentary pause was more than enough opening for Tonks to take advantage and her second curse connected with his left shoulder and the impact threw him backwards and damn near flipped him completely over. For the second time in as many minutes Voldemort was forced to hold the intense pain at bay as he lay motionless on the ground though he was greatly relieved that it did not hurt nearly as much as what he had experienced when that unknown orb had collided with his chest.

Every Death Eaters around looked on in shock at their fallen master but were relieved and a little awed when he began moving again. It took a moment but he was able to pick himself up and dust himself off before turning his burning red eyes to the former Auror.

“You shall pay dearly for that, you little whore.” He seethed through clenched teeth as he raised his wand once again. However, his confusion and anger was rapidly turning into panic when his wand once again refused to work. He continued shouting curse after curse, his voice getting more strained and desperate as he went along. Dumbledore, and Voldemort’s other prisoners, who had resigned themselves to the belief that Harry truly did plan to make a deal with Voldemort, realized that despite being present for every word spoken, they actually had no idea what was truly going on. After reaching this conclusion, the twinkle began to return to Dumbledore’s eyes as he greatly anticipated seeing the direction this was going.

“WHAT THE DEVIL IS THIS?” Voldemort raged as he whipped around to face Harry once more while waving his now useless wand in the air.

“I would think that that it would be obvious. For your crimes, I have decided to turn you into that which you hate most in this world. A muggle!” Harry said in a mock excited voice as if he were revealing some great secret. “But have no fear, I fully plan to keep my part of our bargain. I will not try to gain power over areas you have recently conquered, since I think the people are going to want their communities back. Also, as promised, I gave you the gift of immortality, I just simply took your magic from you at the same time. But sadly, with your attempt at deception during your wizard’s oath, I’m afraid your word cannot be trusted. So I’m sorry to say that you will just have to remain here where I can keep an eye on you. Oh, I know, you can share a cell with your old pal Wormtail. You can play like your having a sleep over or something. Won’t that be fun?” Harry said in a very giddy voice as if he seemed very excited about the prospect. Tonks and Bella stood in the background snickering to themselves and even Dumbledore who was growing weaker by the moment could not hold back his amusement.

“You have also broken our agreement, Potter! You must comply with these guidelines or you will lose your magic.” To most of those present it was a bit of a shock to see the Dark Lord so calm and composed when he just found out that he had lost all of his magic. But those that knew him best knew that he was absolutely furious and may have already felt a panic attack coming on. ‘Someone is clutching at straws now.’ Harry thought to himself with amusement.

“Sorry, Tom, but you are wrong.” He replied while lifting his right hand to cover his heart as if the Dark Lord’s accusation had wounded him. “If you remember correctly, I swore no oath and I gave no word to keep. In my judgment you simply had no alternative. Everything I have offered, you shall have, but I certainly never said that you could have it all and still leave now did I. But, alas, it is almost time for a little recreation, so allow me to introduce you to a few of my friends.” He said before he let out a loud whistle. After this chosen signal Voldemort whipped around to face his men. The last thing he saw before the world went black was well over three hundred witches and wizards appearing out of nowhere on the other side of the two shields that had isolated the Death Eater forces into three groups. His last thoughts were rather smug as he pondered how a mere three hundred could ever hope to compete with a force ten times their size. He didn’t know who they were or who had gotten the idea in their heads that this was a winnable fight, but he was going to enjoy watching them get crushed. Of course he had no idea how wrong he was.

The moment after his fighters appeared Harry bent down and picked up a rock about the size of his fist and smashed it, with a resounding crack, to the back of Voldemort’s head. He could have just as easily used magic but there was something satisfying about doing something with your own hands. The self proclaimed Dark Lord slumped to the ground without a sound so Harry prepared to jump into the fight as well. Looking around he saw two groups of about one hundred and sixty fighters on either side of the confinement area he now occupied. They were vastly outnumbered by about five to one on each side but they were much more skilled and had more knowledge to call upon. But despite these advantages they were still being weighed down by numbers and were hard pressed to make much of an impact.

“Fools.” Harry heard Bella mutter to herself when she saw the Death Eaters that were but a few feet away from them. Every one of them were turned to either the left or the right watching their fellow dark wizards fight instead of focusing on their own surroundings. Many apparently still had not gotten the clue and continued to bombard the shields with curses and hexes in an attempt to join one fight or the other. But like before, none had any effect. Seeing the difficulty the Azkaban fighters were having Bella quickly signaled for the Dementors by sending a burst of red magic into the air. Within seconds two hundred of the foul creatures glided through the main gates and quickly spread out across the battlefield, passing right through the shields as if they were not even there. The Death Eaters and professors felt their presence almost immediately and spun around in different directions to locate them. It was at this time that those still locked up with Harry, Bella and Tonks were reminded that they were not alone. They quickly began to panic at the look in Harry’s eyes and they wanted nothing more at that particular time than to turn tail and run. Also the addition of five Dementors certainly didn’t make them feel any better about their chances. Four of the Dementors took up position in front of Harry and the girls while Dementor ‘Bob’ stood at his side. After giving the clan leader a brief sharp nod the group of eight began marching forward towards their targets.

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Dumbledore watched on in absolute glee as Harry explained to Voldemort that he was now a muggle. Although he had managed to keep his body language neutral, he was not able to hide the rage, disbelief and fear from his eyes. The look was almost enough to make you feel sorry for the man. Almost, being the operative word. He had heard Harry distinctly say something about meeting some friends of his and this comment left the old man deeply confused but that was soon to fade. Like Voldemort and the Death Eaters, his attention, and that of his colleagues, was pulled away from Harry only to be pulled in the direction of what started out as a minor disruption but quickly grew into an all out battle to the death. For a moment he thought it might have simply been a confrontation between a couple of Death Eaters. These thoughts were cast aside though as they

stripped off their Death Eater robes and masks to reveal top quality dark green battle robes. Though they had removed their masks their hoods were still up so it would be next to impossible to identify them while they were constantly moving during the battle. Once it was over he may be able to see through the concealment but as things were it would be a waste of both time and energy, although he was greatly curious as to who these people were and where they had come from.

While it was true that he had no clue as to the identity of these people he felt a great deal of sorrow due to the fact that they seemed to be throwing their lives away for a lost cause. The odds were too great and it would take a miracle to overcome them. At that moment he remembered his conversation with Harry the night not that long ago when he had traveled to Azkaban to 'release' the boy. With all that was said during that meeting one statement rang louder in his head than any other. He had said, 'Harry Potter is gone, he no longer exists. He died the same day you threw him away.' The old Harry Potter would have surely have refused to let anyone fight alongside him if he could prevent it in an effort to keep them out of harms way. But this man that he now looked upon was colder and indifferent to the troubles of those outside of his small corner of the universe. It hurt him greatly to know that it was his own inept judgments that had brought the world within a short distance to a global holocaust. The old man sighed sadly at the thought of the grave mistakes he had made in the past. But he took a small amount of comfort in the fact that after today he will not be in a position to make the same mistakes again for some other small boy. Unlike most people he was not afraid of death, in fact he greatly looked forward to it. He just wished that he could go out in a more 'creative' and 'entertaining' way. Dying on a cold windswept beach surrounded by the dead and dying wasn't what he was hoping for. Putting these thoughts to the back of his mind he refocused his attention to the scenery around him. The first thing he saw was the absolutely flabbergasted looks on his colleague's faces. Curious, he followed their line of vision and it took all of his self control to prevent his jaw from dropping in shock.

When the unknown fighters had first appeared he was absolutely certain that they would be defeated and each one would be killed. However that did not seem to be the case. Where as vastly superior numbers would normally be a huge advantage in any army's favor,

here it seemed to be a hindrance. Harry's 'friends', as he called them, used the size of their enemy to their own advantage by pushing full force into their ranks before each fighter would then brake off from the rest. Once they were on their own they would simply use their speed to run through their lines, throwing curses at anyone they happened to come across. This strategy was all the more effective because the Death Eaters had to be careful not to hit their own allies if their curses happened to have missed their elusive targets. Dumbledore watched in awe at the speed and skill that was being demonstrated and, being ever the scholar, he was greatly interested in who had trained them to fight in such a fashion. He was greatly impressed that they utilized muggle martial arts techniques since most wizards seemed to shy away from physical forms fighting. Their tactics and fighting style seemed faintly familiar to him but for that moment anyway he was unable to place it.

As time dragged on it became clear that they would not be able to win this fight on their own. The vast majority of the Death Eaters could not even begin to hope to match their skill but they still had the numbers and every time someone would be stunned one of the others would simply revive them. When they were injured, if it were possible, they would be healed enough to reenter the fight so the Azkaban fighters were always left with the feeling that they were accomplishing nothing. Suddenly an eerie chill spread over the battlefield like a thick blanket that smothered everything in its wake. Turning his head quickly towards the direction of the main gate Dumbledore quickly strengthened his mental defenses as best he could and was immensely glad of this when he saw numerous black robed figures emerging from the gateway. When they began to spread out everyone took notice of their arrival and Harry's forces took advantage at this momentary lapse of concentration to hit their enemies harder than they had been doing previously.

Looking over towards Harry he saw five of the creatures make their way to him, one being a bit taller than the others and much more powerful. Together with both Tonks and Bellatrix they began marching towards the group, presumably to get to the Death Eaters that were behind them. Realizing who the tallest Dementor must be, Dumbledore groaned softly as he put his head back down, an action that did not go unnoticed. For a brief moment he even had to stifle a

soft whimper before it past his lips. He was not looking forward to being anywhere near that creature again. Knowing full well it wouldn't do any good, he didn't even both to warn his friends and fellow captives at what they were about to experience as the figures drew closer. For quite a while time seemed to slow down as his mental shields were brutally attacked by the power that emanated from the dark creatures. Whether it was two seconds or two hours he could not honestly tell you, all he knew for sure was that he was eternally grateful when his mind could withstand no more and his vision went black.

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Harry stalked towards his prey with a single minded determination. The only person he blamed more for his hard life than Dumbledore, was Voldemort. And these people, animals really, served him and carried out his orders. These were the men and women that were responsible for so many more deaths and emotional upheavals than anyone could possibly count. It seems their whole purpose in life was to do nothing more than destroy lives. And they enjoy doing it. The only way to protect other children from experiencing what he had gone through was to eliminate as many of these savages as possible, whether they are killed or thrown into a cell in the prison makes no difference to him. Either way, they are getting exactly what they deserve.

Without even looking down at the unconscious forms of his former school teachers, Harry stepped over them without missing a step. By the time Bella and Tonks had passed them as well, the Death Eaters had collected themselves enough to fire at least some random curses. But since they were already beginning to feel the effects of the Dementors as well, their aim was off and not much power was put into each spell. The closer they got the more desperate the Death Eaters became. On a number of occasions a few tried to cast the Patronus Charm at the Dementors but they seemed to do little more than annoy the powerful creatures. By now, every one of them was pale and their skin had become clammy and coated with sweat despite the cold atmosphere of the island. Deciding that it would be a good idea to take at least a few prisoners, Harry called the Dementors back. Raising his hands slightly he held them so that his

palms were a mere four inches from each other. In no time at all, bands of glittering gold lightening jumped back and forth between his hands. At first it started out rather small and didn't look all that remarkable. But as the seconds ticked by more and more bands appeared and the glow was beginning to grow brighter. Thirty seconds after he began Harry ripped his hands apart and what looked like a partial shock wave erupted from the golden light and flew at an alarming speed towards the terrified Death Eaters. Unknown to them, this was the same spell Harry had used to capture so many Death Eaters the last time Voldemort was stupid enough to bring his forces here.

When the shockwave slammed into the Death Eaters most of those in the front were thrown backwards so violently that they had been thrown into the air and came crashing back down on the now unconscious forms of their comrades. The sudden arrival of the powerful Dementors and the shock and fear the Death Eaters felt at the sight of their allies being taken out so easily gave their outnumbered opponents the opening they needed to strike hard and fast. Due to the strength of the Dementors they received very little resistance from then on and the remaining Death Eaters were subdued fairly easily. Seeing the Dementors swooping down on anyone nearby and 'kissing' them was enough for a great number of them to simply throw their wands down and surrender. These men and women were only stunned but with a modified version of the spell that was one of Bella's pet projects. She had only recently finished the calculations that went into building the spell and this was the first time it had been used in a combat situation. I'm sure the Death Eaters would agree that it is very effective. The spell itself would never wear off on its own, you must use the counter curse which is only slightly different from the standard Enervate charm. All in all, the battle lasted only about half an hour but the fighting had been brutal and it was very unlikely that anyone would forget the skill and determination of Harry's 'friends' any time soon. Once everything was under control Harry dropped the two massive shields before going through and making sure each Death Eater was either stunned or effectively bound. And just for good measure he also hit each professor with a stunning curse, no sense in taking chances, after all.

“Alright listen up!” He called out to get everyone’s attention. “Start taking our injured and dead inside so that we may begin making arrangements for them. Anyone who is able, I would like them to begin clearing away the bodies of the dead Death Eaters as well as those who have received the ‘Kiss’. Those still alive just leave where they are for now. We must look to our own people first.” For the next hour Harry, Tonks and Bella helped care for the more critically wounded before they were taken back into the castle to receive more treatment and rest. Despite their superior skill and their element of surprise everyone was still greatly surprised to learn that they had only lost eighteen men and women in the attack. However, neither that surprise nor their victory would be much comfort to those that had lost a mother or father, sister or brother.

When it came time to dispose of the bodies of the dead Death Eaters Harry decided to use the same method Barty Crouch jr. had used when disposing of the body of his father during Harry’s fourth year at Hogwarts. He would simply transfigure the bodies into something insignificant. Due to the fact that they were currently on an island with a rather rocky beach he chose to transfigure them all into small pebbles and cast them into the sea. This also included those that had been ‘Kissed’ since they were as good as dead anyway. With that chore taken care of, Harry saw to it that every captured Death Eater was securely bound.

Soon enough the rough terrain had been cleared of all but the stunned Death Eaters and Hogwarts professors. All uninjured fighters had now returned to the grounds and took up position behind the many captured Death Eaters, who were still bound, forming a half circle around them to prevent escape. Dumbledore and his group were set a bit away from Voldemort’s forces but it was quite obvious they were taking no chances since they too were being blocked from any type of escape they might choose to try once they regain consciousness. Just for fun he had Voldemort placed directly in front of him. It was quite possible that the Dark Lord could convince himself that the present conflict was, and his subsequent ‘demotion’ if you will, was merely some horrible dream. If that were the case, Harry wanted his face to be the first thing that the old boy saw when he came around. After all, you don’t become a muggle everyday, it should be special. But he planned on leaving him for last. But it

wasn't just Harry and the other fighters that were there to keep everyone in line. No, in the distance you could distinctly see the black robes of the Dementors whipping about them in the howling wind as they looked on for any sign of trouble. Harry had asked them to keep their distance for one simple reason. He needed these people to wake up, not be driven insane, that could wait for later.

After several moments of thought Harry raised his head and nodded sharply and everyone immediately drew their wands once more and pointed them at the unconscious forms in front of them. While Harry shot a fairly large number of spells at once everyone else shot them off one at a time, reviving the stunned men and women. Once each had been hit with the counter curse it became a waiting game for everyone to be coherent and aware of their surroundings. Surprisingly it was Professor Flitwick that had awoken first and shook off the effects of Bella's modified stunner. Everyone had clearly thought that Dumbledore would be the first to awaken. 'He must be worse off than I thought.' Harry thought to himself in an emotionless, uncaring tone. After ten minutes Harry was beginning to get annoyed. More than seventy percent of the Death Eaters and the rest of the professors had awoken within the first five minutes but since that time nothing had happened. He was seriously tempted to simply kill them right there but that would make him no different than Voldemort. He had to at least give them something remotely resembling a proper trial. Well, most of them anyway. There was a select few that would not receive that luxury.

After another few minutes Harry conjured a large squashy chair and plopped down into it to sit out the wait. Looking around at the crowd he was amused by the many reactions he received when he looked at someone. The one he found the most satisfying however was Dumbledore's. The old man simply could not keep eye contact with the younger man and when he did look he was met with a stony gaze that would cause him to flinch back and concentrate on something else. But in those brief moments Harry could almost read the man's mind without using any form of Legillimency. In his crystal blue eyes held a lot of emotion that only seemed to be there when he was looking Harry directly in the eye. Those emotions were fear, shame, sadness and surprisingly anger. Harry almost snorted out loud when he saw this. 'What right does he have to be angry with me? He is the

one that caused this, not me.' Shaking off such thoughts he gave another look around the area and was greatly relieved to see that everyone was now awake, though a few still seemed to be shaking off the effects of the stunning spell. Although many still seemed to be disoriented, Harry decided to begin anyway since he was growing increasingly bored. Hopping to his feet he banished his chair with a wave of his hand and turned to the crowd with a gleeful smile on his face.

"Now, I'm sure you are all wondering why I have not killed you yet. The answer to that question is fairly simple. I'm sure the magical community will demand to know if you are a willing follower of Voldemort or if you were somehow forced to fight for him. So, if any one of you have had the Imperious curse place on you or was forced to drink a potion of some kind that took away your free will, I would like you to raise your hands now." Harry shook his head in exasperation when everyone cringed at the name Voldemort but did his best to ignore such asinine behavior. To very little surprise nearly half of the Death Eaters had raised their hands immediately, proclaiming their innocence. Harry just looked out over the crowd as if he did not see anything.

"Nobody? Good, now we can..." To the surprise of many, including Bella and Tonks, Harry was cut off when the Minister of Magic himself came marching up from the shore with his entourage directly behind him.

"POTTER." The man yelled out in shock though his acting was clearly overdone but since no one knew that Harry was on the island Fudge must also have been there to find out. Harry, Tonks and Bella agreed that the man was more than likely part of the fight but turned and ran when it became obvious that they would lose. All it would take was stripping off your Death Eater mask and robes then just come walking back up the beach like you had just arrived. However even if he had not been involved in the actual fight the man clearly knew something. When the Minister of Magic shows up at the scene of a rather large battle just after it ends, it is not coincidence.

"What is the meaning of this? I demand an answer!" The man shouted. Harry just quirked an eyebrow at the man's tone. Either he

was completely stupid or he had no idea who he was dealing with. It was probably both.

“Well, since you asked so politely,” Harry began with sarcasm dripping from every word. “These men just tried to attack and capture Azkaban. They failed, so they will now face the consequences.”

“You are in a position to do nothing with these men and women, Potter. Besides, many of them are Ministry officials and you have no authority over them. They will be taken from here and kept in a Ministry detention facility until their trials can be arranged.” Fudge retorted after looking over the faces of the now maskless Death Eaters. After thinking for a moment Harry decided that he might as well play along.

“You are absolutely right. I have no power over the Ministry so I will leave them in your care.” With a few quick words every member of the Ministry was standing beside or behind a very smug Cornelius Fudge. He obviously thought he had won some great victory or something but that was about to change. Fudge sucked in a deep breath like he was about to go on to some long winded monolog about the others being taken to the Ministry as well but he never got the chance.

“Since I have all of you together, we might as well get this over with. Death Eaters, for the most part, usually get a life sentence in Azkaban for the crimes they committed while in Voldemort’s service. But you people are worse. Not only did you willingly join Voldemort, but you also betrayed the trust of those who put you into office. Also, you are guilty of the murders of fifty seven different department heads and untold number of underlings and associates. For these crimes you will each receive the Dementors kiss before your bodies are burned and cast into the sea.” Neither Fudge nor his guards had time to even draw their wands before the Dementors swept up behind them. As they started taking soul after soul even Harry had to turn his attention someplace else to stop the chill that ran up his back each time he remembered that he almost met the same fate when he was in his third year at Hogwarts.

“Harry, how could you?” Harry snapped his head around in the direction of the voice and he nearly smacked himself for not recognizing it right away.

“How could I what?” He asked his former mentor.

“You just had dozens of defenseless men executed.”

“So what. Don’t even start judging me, old man, as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont you have ordered the Kiss to be preformed on numerous people over the years, so don’t act like you smell like roses. And as for them being defenseless, what idiot in their right mind would give someone their wand right before they were about to kill them.” He said before walking off to help move their prisoners into the cellblocks. Surprisingly the prisoners gave them little trouble, whether that was because they were afraid of Harry or afraid of the new more powerful Dementors or a combination of the two, no one really knew, or cared for that matter.

After all of the Death Eaters had been put into their cells Harry and Bella walked back outside. The only ones still on the grounds were the Hogwarts professors who seemed to be all crowded around Dumbledore. While Bella set about removing all of the illusion charms that hid the improvements to the fortress, Harry walked over to the small cluster of teachers that had been joined by Snape and McGonagall. Not really caring what they were talking about and ignoring the fact that he was interrupting ‘grown up’ talk, Harry laid a hand on Snape’s shoulder and when the older man looked up he motioned him to the side. For what felt like the hundredth time that day Harry went about healing any major injury he could find. Not but a few seconds after he started however Dumbledore ripped his hand off of his chest.

“Harry, please, just let me go. Trust me, I want to die!” The old man said with a kind smile as if he were talking to some distraught young kid. Harry, of course, was not that young any more and he was far from distraught.

“That is precisely why I won’t let this happen. You are going to survive and you are going to face the world that was created by your

mistakes. I will not allow you to use your death like some form of penance like that coward Lupin. If you want to make up for your past mistakes, as you say, then you will do it here on earth, not in hell where you belong.” Harry said in a clipped tone that was not unlike McGonagall’s. Dumbledore tried a few more times to stop Harry but he was unsuccessful and soon he was back to full health and feeling stronger than he had in years.

“Now, here is how things are going to be from now on. First, I have set up a bit of punishment for you because of your unfair and ILLEGAL actions during my trial as well as for my false imprisonment. Starting today, you actually have a certain level of immortality. Since it is such a small bit of the gift there were no complications.”

“What do mean, he’s immortal, and what complications?” McGonagall shouted as she jumped back to her feet. Everyone else including Dumbledore looked on at Harry as if he were insane.

“No, he is not immortal, not really anyway. All I have done is ensure that he will live for the next sixty years. It has now been sixty years since Tom Riddle killed his first victim so I felt that was a good number. Now normally I can only give immortality to someone who is willing. That was why I had to play that little game with Tom earlier. I had to put him into a position where he would readily agree. I didn’t have to do this with Dumbledore because I wasn’t giving him nearly enough to sustain him forever, just for those sixty one years actually. He had had a chance to stop Voldemort numerous times while he was first rising to power but he never did it. Now he WILL live with the consequences. Speaking of such...” Harry produced a long scroll from the folds of his robes and dropped it onto Dumbledore’s chest where he was still laying. In confusion the old man picked it up and unrolled it. Seeing only a list of names he looked back to Harry for an explanation.

“Every person on that list is now under my protection. As you can see, some are former Death Eaters or members of the Order and some are even thought to be dead. They are no longer citizens of Great Britain, but citizens of Azkaban. Once you leave this island it will disappear and never return. But soon I will be able to allow these people to travel back and forth from here at will if they wish to visit

family and friends, go shopping or simply get out for a while. When the Ministry is put back together and Aurors are back on the street, if one of my people is arrested for a past crime, I will come after them. If they are attacked and injured, there will be retribution. Also if one of these people happens to commit a crime while in England, investigators from Azkaban will be allowed to review all files and evidence regarding the case so that we may be sure that the accusations and arrest were not politically motivated or some means of revenge.” Harry paused for a moment to collect his thoughts as everyone around him was looking on with shock and a little anger. Who was he to demand anything of a great wizard like Albus Dumbledore, and demand it in such a disrespectful manner? Having got his thoughts in order he reached back into his robes and produced a second scroll of parchment and also handed that one to Dumbledore who had just now stood up from the ground that he was sure would be his deathbed.

“This scroll is simply your standard magical contract, only much more powerful.” Dumbledore took the scroll and discovered it to be quite long. He reached up to readjust his half moon spectacles and began to read it through thoroughly. It basically just described everything Harry had just demanded but in much greater detail. Apparently Harry, or whoever wrote this up, wanted to leave no room for loopholes or technicalities. As he neared the bottom of the scroll he was getting more and more confused that there didn’t seem to be anything he was willing to give up in return. Did the young man actually believe that someone in a position of power would be naive enough to sign such a document when such an important component was left out of the written agreement? However he didn’t have the opportunity to voice his curiosity because he suddenly found what he was looking for. The reason he was unable to find it at first was because he had assumed that it would be described in detail much like his demands were, but it wasn’t. In fact the missing component was so small that it only took up the final line of the contract. The old man’s eyes widened in shock as he read that line over and over again.

“In return I will guarantee that Tom Marvolo Riddle, AKA Lord Voldemort, and his supporters, Death Eaters, will remain locked away deep within Azkaban until the end of time.” Dumbledore’s head shot up and he looked at Harry with wide eyes as if searching for

something. The younger man smirked a bit, he actually found the probing of his mind amusing.

“If you are asking yourself if I would really use this as leverage to get what I want, then I assure you, I would. The safety of the people on this island is my only concern right now. I am perfectly capable of protecting from assaults on this fortress but when it comes to people leaving to visit relatives and such, I can guarantee nothing. Each of them can take care of themselves very well but not if they are facing twenty Aurors who would have no problem killing them for resisting arrest on bullshit charges. So, you will either sign that document or Voldemort and his servants go free.”

“But Harry, I have no authority to sign such a contract. Only the Minister of Magic or top ranking officials in his administration could do so.” Harry found it rather annoying that he was stalling but decided to hold his anger back for now.

“Wrong! According to the York Accord of 1737, if the Minister of Magic is killed or permanently incapacitated, then his senior undersecretary would then inherit the office. However if both should fall, then the job would pass to the most qualified of the three department heads for Magical Law Enforcement, Department of Mysteries and finally the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont. As you can see, everyone ahead of you is now either dead or had received the Dementor’s Kiss. Either way, none of them is currently able to take the job, so that leaves only you. While it is true that you have not been sworn in yet, the fact remains that you became the Minister the moment Fudge’s soul left his body, so the contract will be perfectly legal. Now sign it!” It seemed all of the professors were shocked to learn that Dumbledore was now the Minister of Magic that they didn’t even seem the least bit upset by Harry’s tone or attitude and even if they did Harry wouldn’t care in the least. The man nodded slightly in defeat and took the quill that Harry had just conjured and held out to him. While it was true that Voldemort no longer had his magic, he was still immortal and could cause an awful lot of damage with his Death Eaters if they were to walk free and the look in Harry’s eyes told him that he would have no problem doing exactly as he threatened to do.

Dumbledore merely quickly scratched his name at the bottom of the paper without even looking before he handed the quill back to Harry who also signed it. After that was done Harry banished the quill and made an exact copy of the contract and handed it to his former mentor while keeping the original for himself.

“Good, now that everything seems to be in order, I must go. I’m sure you remember where the boats are.” Harry stated plainly before walking off towards the still unconscious body of Lord Voldemort. McGonagall and Snape made quick, but heartfelt, goodbyes to their former colleagues before returning to the fortress. Just before he reached his longtime enemy, Harry turned turned back around and pulled something from his pockets. “Oh, you’ll be needing these.” Was all he called out as way of an explanation before banishing two normal leather pouches towards the professors before setting off again. Picking up one of the bags Professor Flitwick examined it to be sure there were no harmful charms or curses on it before taking a peek at what was inside. After finding nothing out of the ordinary, for a magical bag anyway, he opened it up only to find a hand full of small wooden block. He was confused for a moment before he took his wand back out and softly whispered a short incantation. Almost instantly each of the blocks began to grow until each one had resumed the size of a rather large magical trunk. His eyes went wide after he lifted the lip on one to reveal it was stocked to capacity with rare and valuable books. Looking back over his shoulder he could see that his colleagues were just as surprised as he was. Once again he used his wand to see if any nasty surprises had been left behind but instead he found something rather odd.

“Albus, the copyright charms have been broken. Why would he do that? How did he do that?” Flitwick gasped out. Copyright charms were used by publishers to make sure that the books they print can not be copied with a simple wave of the wand. They wanted to ensure, and rightfully so, that their books can only be obtained from them. It would be rather embarrassing to have someone selling your book at a cheaper price and taking all of you business.

“Why indeed?” Dumbledore muttered to himself for a moment before the answer can to him. ”He must have had the books copied to help aid in the teaching of those that obviously live here with him. While Mr.

Potter could make a good teacher if he put his mind to it, he can't very well teach what he does not know himself. Incase you didn't notice, all the magic he used today was wandless. Clearly he uses magic differently and more effectively than anyone else so there is no need for him to learn incantations and wand movements that would be useless to him. But as to how he managed to break the charms, I don't know and I don't relish the idea of pressing him for answers a second time." He said thoughtfully as he cringed slightly at the look in Harry's eyes nearly two weeks ago when he first came to the island with news of Harry's new found innocence. Most of those around him were confused but Professor Flitwick had a shrewd look in his eyes.

"You knew about all of this, didn't you?" He asked in a fierce whisper as if he was afraid Harry would hear him and become angry. Dumbledore nodded in a weary sort of way.

"I did not know about all of these other people, but the rest I knew and was unable to speak of it due to some powerful secrecy spell Mr. Potter was able to perform on all of us." After a few moments of thinking he agreed to explain all he knew on the boat ride back to the mainland that is until he remembered his pensieve and decided to simply show them what had taken place if he was able now that others knew the truth as well. It would make for a much better story then simply trying to explain something as important as that encounter was. They were about ready to head back to the boats when out of curiosity they turned to see Harry revive Voldemort.

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"WAKE UP, TOMMY!" Harry shouted as he firmly slapped Voldemort across the face as if he were merely trying to wake him after a long night. Harry had used the counter curse to Bella's new and improved stunner but the snake like man was still a bit groggy. When the sting of the blow finally registered in the man's mind his eyes snapped open and glared at Harry with hatred flowing from every pore.

"POTTER..."

"Now now, Tommy, we won't have any of that. Incase your mind is still a little fuzzy, I will remind you that you are now a muggle. You

have lost all rights you had in the magical world. Your sole purpose on this earth now is for my amusement, and believe me, it will be a long time before I grow tired of your screams. I am a firm advocate for the belief in 'an eye for an eye'. Even when I grow tired of you there are many here who would love to take a few shots at you. I'm sure you will remember some of them being that they were once Death Eaters and suffered at the other end of your wand. But you never know, maybe someone will show you mercy." Harry spoke as if he were speaking of something innocent and carefree and that made the 'former' Dark Lord more nervous than the words themselves. Suddenly Harry leaned over and pulled him up to his feet and draped an arm across his shoulders as if they were the best of friends and slowly they began walking towards the main entrance of the fortress. Voldemort's body was extremely tense and numerous times he tried to stop walking, to do something to try to get away, but everything failed. For some reason, he could put up no resistance, all the while Potter continued to ramble on about the most mundane and insignificant topics.

"You see these doors, Tom?" Harry asked in a friendly tone as he pointed up towards the massive doors that served as the gateway of the outer wall. "Over the last few years these have served as a doorway of sorts to a life free of persecution and manipulation. For others though," Voldemort froze in his tracks as a wave of icy cold air seemed to wash over him and his mind became clouded by his own pain as his screams from his past pounded in his head. Though he could not see it he knew instantly that a very powerful Dementor was approaching. "They are the very gates of Hell." Harry finished with a smug grin spreading across his face as he watched his old enemy in pain.

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After Harry and Voldemort had disappeared into the fortress, the Hogwarts professors stood on the grounds for a few more minutes trying to make sense of everything that had happened recently. They were pulled out of these thoughts however when they saw Harry walk back out through the gates once again. He stopped in his tracks when his eyes landed on his unwanted guests. After a brief moment

looking eye to eye with him they quickly got the message and walked quickly back towards the beach.

“Ah, so where is Tommy?” Bella asked when she suddenly appeared at Harry’s side. Harry looked down into her eyes and smiled slightly.

“Bob is escorting him down to his cell now. Is everything ready?”

“Yep. All the illusions have been removed, everything has been packed away and Snape should be out here momentarily.”

“And you’re sure he can handle this?” He asked in a worried tone. Bella just rolled her eyes as if she had answered this question a thousand times before.

“Yes, I’m sure. I have worked with him on it for three days now. He can recite the incantation perfectly in his sleep and he has more than enough power. Nothing is going to go wrong.” She said firmly as she looked intently into his eyes. Harry has been very nervous about performing this spell because if anything goes wrong than the power used will backfire on the casters and kill them. While Harry and Bella cannot be killed, Snape can. Harry would have rather used Tonks for the third part of the spell but unfortunately she is not powerful enough to pull it off. Actually, to be honest, he would rather have done this by himself but even he could not perform the entire spell on his own since it required three separate incantations in three different languages simultaneously.

Harry was immensely relieved when Snape showed up just a few minutes later because the longer he had to wait the more paranoid he would become. Snape for his part looked almost as nervous as Harry but Bella was as calm and composed as ever. After all, if Snape died then it would not affect her in the least. It was well known that they despised each other. However, like Harry and Snape, she just wanted to get this over with. No words were spoken between them, they just took up their positions standing facing each other in a triangle formation. After a few moments of silence Harry began. Both Snape and Bella glanced at him briefly and had to suppress a shudder since he was speaking a language few have ever been able to understand. Even after serving Voldemort for most of her life and

being with Harry for over four years, the sound of Parseltongue still freaked her out a bit. Thirty seconds later Bella drew her wand and began chanting in what Snape had recently learned was ancient Egyptian.

After Bella began, Snape kept an eye on his watch nervously as the seconds ticked by. He knew that Harry would complete the incantation to perfection but he didn't like the idea of his life being placed in the hands of Bellatrix. He knew she would have no problem if she made a mistake that resulted in an untimely death, specifically his own, but he also knew that she was a perfectionist and how she wanted this to succeed just as much as anyone else. But the woman was still entirely too unstable in his opinion. Looking back at his watch he nearly gasped when he had five seconds to go and his hands suddenly began to feel clammy. Grasping his wand in his right hand he waited for what felt like an eternity before beginning himself. Exactly one minute after Harry had begun, Snape started a similar incantation, only his was in Latin.

For several minutes the three voices and languages blended together into one strong voice that spoke in a dialect that none had ever heard before, or would probably ever hear again. This spell took the magic of three individuals and combined their power into one source that's sole purpose is to remove Azkaban from the normal plain of existence and hold it in a state of limbo. With this in place no power on earth could get to the island or it's inhabitants since it will technically no longer exist on this world. As long as at least one of the original power sources still lives, in this case Harry, Bella or Snape, then the power protecting the island will remain in place.

Five minutes after Harry first began a small red orb began to form in the center of their formation and every so often small streaks of light would reach out and brush each of the three casters for a few moments before retreating back to the orb which was steadily growing larger. By now both Snape and Bella were sweating profusely and their words sounded strained as they were fighting to keep their concentration. Harry for his part looked and sounded perfectly calm but even he was beginning to feel the pressure. After ten minutes Harry suddenly stopped speaking and opened his eye and gazed in wonder at the now Quaffle sized orb that floated

between them. Soon both Snape and Bella had finished and their exhaustion was quickly forgotten as they gazed ahead of them. Slowly the light coming from the orb began to pulse slightly but it quickly picked up speed. Soon it was flashing so rapidly that you would be hard pressed to distinguish between one flash and another. Suddenly, the orb exploded outward in all directions with such force that all three were thrown to the ground so roughly that it was a miracle that they all remained conscious.

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Albus Dumbledore sat at the bow of the small rickety boat that was taking them back to mainland England with a sorrowful look on his face as the boats oars rowed by themselves. He glanced around at those accompanying him with an assortment of emotions playing out within him. Not that long ago Hogwarts had a full complement of capable professors who, despite the adamant denial of some, all loved to teach the young men and women who passed through its halls. But now most of them are gone. Professors Sprout, Sinistra, Trelawney and Kingsley Shacklebolt, who had taken the post of defense professor two years ago, breaking the so called curse on the position, were now dead. Killed while following his orders to protect the school at all costs. Professors Snape and McGonagall would now be teaching children in Azkaban if the list of names Harry had given him was anything to go by. Now only four remained to guide the young minds of England. Professor Flitwick, Grubblyplank, who had taken over in Care of Magical Creatures permanently after Hagrid was killed. Professor Antwite, who was now teaching History of Magic. And the final professor was Dumbledore himself. However, now he wished that there were only three of them left.

He had been almost relieved when he realized his wounds were too severe to survive without medical aid. He had lived a very long and very eventful life. He had dearly wished for death for more than a few years now and the only reason he had to go on living was the war with Voldemort. But even now, when Voldemort appeared to pose no more of a threat, this simple release was denied to him. He thought back to the last sixty years and shuddered at the thought of having to go through that again. But with several wars and many upstart dark lords that sixty years had been busy and had gone by fast. Now with

most Death Eaters in England captured or killed, or soon to be one or the other, it appeared that there wouldn't be anyone willing to try to seize power with Harry Potter still alive. In that atmosphere, the next sixty years was shaping up to be very boring and would undoubtedly go by very slowly. Even now he could not understand why the boy held so much hatred for him. Sure, he had been wrongfully accused but was that enough to sit back and do nothing while countless men, women and children lost their lives. He certainly didn't think so.

He continued along this line of thought for sometime, trying to find a way to justify his actions while pointing out to himself that others, such as Sirius, had been wrongfully imprisoned as well but didn't feel like sitting back and doing nothing while the world destroyed itself. No matter how much he tried to deny it however he could never make himself believe it. After all, wizards and witches in general did the same thing all the time. By refusing to aid the muggle world, much less reveal themselves to it, countless millions have died in war after war while tyrants slaughtered even their own people, but yet wizards refused to get involved. The reason they did nothing is quite simple, if not a bit heartless. The muggle world wasn't their world. And in comparison, Harry obviously felt that the magical world, as well as the muggle world, no longer had any place for him nor he for it.

"MY GOD!" Professor Flitwick squeaked loudly as he stood up from his position in the middle of the boat. The other three quickly raised their heads and looked back in the direction of Azkaban. Their eyes grew wide and their mouths dropped open in shock as they watched what appeared to be a massive magical shock wave speeding towards them.

"Are we passed the anti-apperation wards yet?" Grubblyplank asked nervously as her eyes never strayed from the strange occurrence.

"No, we are not. We have another ten miles at least..." He suddenly cut himself off as the shock wave picked up speed and was nearly upon them. "SHIELD CHARMS! RAISE YOUR SHIELDS!" He yelled in near panic just seconds before the wave crashed into them. With his shield charm in place he braced himself but was shocked when he discovered that while large and magically very powerful, the shockwave didn't pack much of a punch. With as large as the wave

obviously was he figured that as it got further and further away from it's central point it's destructive power dropped off. Looking about him he saw his colleagues looking a little bewildered. Turning around to make sure that Azkaban was not destroyed he received the greatest shock of his life.

The whole of Azkaban Island itself had vanished

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His eyes slightly out of focus and his head pounding, Harry sat himself upright and rubbed his temples for a few moments before he began thinking straight again. Looking around quickly he was greatly relieved to see both Snape and Bella were alive and 'relatively' unharmed. Snape looked as sour as ever as he pinched the bridge of his nose but anyone who even slightly knew the man could see that he was immensely pleased the spell had apparently worked. And being alive was a bonus as well.

Despite the killer headache she was undoubtedly feeling as well, Bella was giggling like an annoying schoolgirl. What she found so amusing neither of them knew but they agreed that it was annoying as hell given the fact that their heads were still throbbing painfully. With a groan both Harry and Snape pulled themselves to their feet. After dusting themselves off Harry approached Bella and lifted her up off the ground. When she was set back down she had stopped giggling but still looked very amused.

"And what, may I ask, is so funny?" Harry asked in an annoyed tone though he was slightly curious. Bella merely looked up at him with a smirk on her face.

"I told you it would work." Harry groaned when she said this and began cursing himself for even asking in the first place. "How many times do I have to tell you that these things will work, but every time you are a nervous wreck."

"Hey, there is a big difference between being careful about these things and simply rushing in to it and doing it recklessly." He defended himself as he crossed his arms over his chest.

“Yes, that is what you said about my new stunner spell as well as the illusion charm and the others we have both constructed over the last few years and every time they have worked perfectly. When I write out the equations when constructing a new spell, I take every precaution and recheck everything I have done over and over again throughout the course of my research. So do me a favor, when I create a new spell, just take my word for it that I know what I’m doing. And when you create a spell, such as the one we just completed, and I tell you that it will work flawlessly, you would save a lot of time and energy by just accepting the fact that I am always right.” She finished with a grin as she took his arm in hers and began leading him towards the front gate. “Lets go, my lover.”

Snape watched the two walk off and shook his head in exasperation. “Insane.” He muttered to himself all the way back inside where he immediately headed straight for his quarters where he intended to sleep until the end of time

TBC

Epilogue will be reposted soon.

PART IV

EPILOGUE

By

Padfootjr24

It had now been nearly eighteen months since Voldemort's defeat on Azkaban and the magical world was still in a state of rebuilding. With Voldemort powerless and most of his more powerful Death Eaters either dead or captured, it was a relatively easy task to hunt down the rest and bring them to justice. Since sending them to Azkaban was no longer an option, construction had begun on a new facility to take its place, that would hopefully be more secure than the island prison had been in more recent years when Voldemort had succeeded with two mass breakouts. Ministries the world over were still looking for replacements for those who had been killed and those that had allied themselves with the Dark Lord.

The magical community had greeted the news of what had truly happened at Azkaban with shock and disbelief, at first, but that shock had quickly turned to anger. Though not all of it was directed at Harry solely, though many still chose to hold him responsible for the current state of the world. The majority of the public's anger was directed at the late Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, and current Minister and Hogwarts Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore. It seemed that most people failed to see where they were also responsible and were more than happy to place ALL the blame on a few select individuals that played key roles instead of acknowledging the fact that they too might also be at fault. But that is human nature. Everyone wants to believe that they had no real part to play in such a disastrous situation but when it comes to something truly remarkable they are more than happy to grab up all of the credit that they can. While it's true that Fudge and Dumbledore held most of the responsibility, as well as certain 'friends' of Harry's, they never would have been able to get away with the farce of a trial and illegal procedures if they had just demanded that their leaders adhered to the very laws that they were sworn to uphold. But they didn't. They allowed themselves to be led

around by their hand like children because, 'hey, this is Dumbledore, he's never wrong,'

When the story broke that Harry now had control of Azkaban and had given sanctuary to numerous people, including many 'former' Death Eaters, only a few had anything beside angry words to say when the list of names was made public. The names that caused the biggest reactions however were obvious. Bellatrix Lestrange, Draco Malfoy and Alister Moody! The first two because of their obvious notoriety as members of Voldemort's inner circle and the last because he was supposed to be dead as well as his close relationship with Dumbledore. The same could be said about Snape and McGonagall. There were a few that demanded that Dumbledore do something about some of the more infamous criminals on the list, but the majority of them kept quiet and didn't much care as long as they stayed on Azkaban and didn't bother decent folk like themselves. They probably didn't want to risk giving Harry Potter a reason to turn his attention to them. Besides, what were the odds that such a hated woman like Bellatrix would risk walking down Diagon Alley? Though most people were revolted that Harry would let the woman wander free, they all, including the Longbottoms, would have given an arm and a leg to see her in one of her 'meetings' with the now powerless Dark Lord.

Dumbledore himself, though he physically felt as young and strong as he did at age fifty, was slowly being worn down by the mounting pressures that were placed upon him as both Minister of Magic and Headmaster of Hogwarts. Unfortunately due to Voldemort's attack on Hogwarts and his execution of many members of the Ministry, there was no one suitably qualified to take over either roll. The only professor that met the right qualifications was Professor McGonagall and as of now the only surviving member of the Ministry, Arthur Weasley, didn't have enough experience. And even if he did he made it perfectly clear that he was only staying on to help rebuild the government and after that was complete he was going to retire to spend as much time as possible with his family. Percy's betrayal had hit them very hard indeed, as well as the news that he had been given the 'Kiss' with the other corrupt Ministry officials on Harry's order. But as much as it hurt them, they held no blame for Harry, not even Ron or Hermione did. The aforementioned Headmaster could

often be seen muttering to himself darkly as he cursed Harry's name when the pressure was particularly heavy.

The entire wizarding world was greatly surprised at the miraculous recovery of the Longbottom family and when they learned that Harry was responsible for it, it only served to triple the amount of mail that was being sent out to the Boy-Who-Lived, asking for assistance with an ailing loved one, but like every other letter sent since Voldemort's downfall, every one was returned unopened and undelivered. Despite the debates that were wide spread on how the feat was accomplished, the three Longbottoms made the most of their time together and held nothing but understanding and thanks for the young wizard that had given them a second chance at a productive life together. Though each of them would have liked to join Harry at Azkaban to get away from all of the pointing and whispered words everywhere they go, they recognized that they could help make the magical world a much better place by remaining a part of it.

Like Percy's 'death' the sudden disappearance of Azkaban Island deeply troubled, at least most of, the Weasley family. Arthur had been searching for his twin sons, Fred and George, for many years now without much success and the sudden disappearance of Ginny had them all in a panic. After Voldemort's defeat Ron informed his parents that Dumbledore had evidence that the twins as well as Ginny were on the island with Harry and Arthur breathed sighed of relief, knowing that no harm would come to them as long as Harry had any fight left in him. Both Arthur and Molly would have immediately rushed to get to their children's side if it had not been for that annoying secrecy charm and he had been able to tell them sooner. After taking a portkey from Hogwarts to the Burrow Ron had tried on numerous occasions to tell his parents the news but each time he tried an incoherent string of noises were all he was able to muster. That is until after Voldemort was defeated. Roughly the same time that Azkaban had vanished, Ron and Hermione discovered that they could now talk about what they had witnessed while in the company of others. With one major exception that is. That one exception had been the fact that Harry was now 'involved' with both Nymphadora Tonks and Bellatrix Lestrange. It appeared that Harry had no intention of allowing his personal life to become a matter of public discussion as it had been while he was a student at Hogwarts.

Ron for his part spent much of his time aiding Frank and Neville Longbottom training new Aurors and Unspeakables for the newly reformed Ministry. While he didn't hold Harry responsible for Percy's fate, he did hold a large amount of anger and hatred for his former best friend. In his mind, Harry had acted as a coward and was no better than Voldemort himself since he refused to get involved until he himself was threatened. Though he never spoke of it out loud this was the same view that Dumbledore was beginning to hold as well. Ron's views were a constant source of arguments between him and his family who believed differently. Just one more thing he held Harry responsible for. With the birth of his son Robert, named for Hermione's murdered father, Ron mellowed a little but may Merlin help you if you ever dare speak a good word of Harry in his presence.

At first Hermione had held the same view as Ron but after the Fedeliuss Charm on the Burrow was removed she was confronted by a very angry Christine Granger. Hermione, who was usually very calm and composed, sometimes even with a look of superiority, while dealing with her little sister, cringed back at the look of absolute fury on the younger woman's face. What followed was a half hour verbal lashing about how stupid she could possibly be to actually expect Harry to help them after what he had been through just because she asked it of him. Remembering the numerous articles that appeared in many different news papers the first few days after they had left Azkaban only served to anger her further when she realized that their 'anonymous' sources most have either been her or her idiot husband since Lupin was wallowing in too much self pity to speak with any reporters and Dumbledore wasn't stupid enough to anger Harry further. Sources that referred to Harry as a cold heartless monster or even the next Dark Lord. After expressing her utter disbelief at her sister's stupidity for actually believing that he would do as they asked after his friends betrayed him in such a way, she stormed out of the house, leaving Hermione crying on the floor. Needless to say, the two had not spoken since. Hermione had tried to contact her on numerous occasions since, but after over a year of returned letters and ignored messages, she finally gave up.

Unlike Ron, the rest of the Weasley family were firmly behind Harry and his decision to remain apart from the rest of the magical world

that at the time had been corrupt and was led by imbeciles. Shortly after the war had ended, both Bill and Charlie had returned to England after a fair bit of begging from their mother. When they returned they were surprised to learn that Fred and George were on Azkaban and that Ginny had recently gone as well and all had obviously chosen to stay there, but they couldn't blame them really. After all, the twins were wanted criminals and Harry had given them a place to stay when just about everyone else, including their little brother, were after their heads. And unfortunately Ginny could no longer go anywhere without someone pointing and pretending to whisper while they spoke of her like she were some vial piece of trash. All thanks to the disgusting rumors her 'loving' brother Ron spread about simply because she wouldn't accept his views on how 'evil' Harry Potter was. The two oldest Weasley children had decided to stay in England for a few months, though they refused to stay at the burrow due to Ron's presence. In the end only Charlie returned to his home and job abroad. Bill decided to transfer back to the Gringotts branch office in London so he could also help in rebuilding the government as he had taken an interest in politics.

And the general public wasn't much better. If one good thing had come from this whole catastrophe, it was that people didn't seem to trust their leaders as much or follow them blindly anymore. Citizens watched the actions of the members of the newly reformed Ministry with a sharp eye for any sign of corruption or dark intentions. They clearly had no desire to repeat the mistakes of the past and that also included closely watching Albus Dumbledore, who didn't hold as much respect as he once did. As promised, Mr. Weasley retired after the new Ministry was formed and each member had been properly trained and had settled in to their new positions. Dumbledore had appealed to him to continue on and take over the position of Minister of Magic, but he had firmly declined. After a year, a public election was held and Bill Weasley was elected Minister of Magic in a landslide vote against a popular former potions professor named Slughorn. The odd thing was that Bill didn't even know he was running until the election was almost over and he himself went to cast his vote. It appeared that at the nomination ceremony the night before, held by the new leaders of the ministry and their subordinates, someone had cast his name. It was probably one of his old friends that thought it would be good for a laugh to see what the reaction

would be. But instead of merely being laughed off, nearly everyone seemed to take it seriously and after a long debate it was agreed that he would join Horace Slughorn on the ballet.

Bill nearly had a heart attack as he read the piece of parchment in his hand. He, of course, had heard of Slughorn and was prepared to vote for the other guy no matter who it was. After all, the man was only one step up from being a celebrity stalker. If someone could help advance his position in any way he would do all that he could to rub shoulders with them but he had no interest and no use for the common individual. Pressing the tip of his wand into the mark below Slughorn's, he was prepared to cast his vote but when he read the name next to it he froze. After several minutes he simply dropped the paper in shock and apparated back to his hotel room and opened a new bottle of Fire Whiskey. And that was where three members of his family found him the next afternoon after the results were announced. Passed out on his floor with two empty bottles next to him and a third had obviously been thrown into the wall. Molly and Arthur were shocked beyond words but Charlie looked absolutely delighted to be there when his parents found his older brother in such a position.

Hogwarts was a completely different matter as opposed to the Ministry. While it had been hard to find people qualified to fill each position, they had a large selection of people with plenty of experience. Finding qualified witches and wizards to teach at Hogwarts high standards was a daunting task when searching for the usual Defense teacher each year, but now Dumbledore had to find six professors, three for three of the four core classes that demanded more experience and talent than all the others. Not since the school was first founded had so many positions been open at the same time.

Albus Dumbledore was currently sitting behind his desk looking over yet another resume of an unqualified applicant for the defense position. It seemed that was all he did recently. School had been back in session for three and a half months now and it seemed that anyone qualified to teach the class either had no interest in teaching or were afraid of the curse that seemed to be on that particular position. Professor Shacklebolt had held the position for more than a single year but he had, in fact, been murdered on school grounds. Magical folk were a superstitious lot and they didn't want to

compromise their life expectancy needlessly. Due to the absence of so many professors, the reopening of the school had to be pushed back a full year while replacements were secured and repairs had been made on the school. He was able to find teachers for most classes before the students returned, with the exception of Defense Against the Dark Arts, so instead of postponing classes even longer he decided to teach the class himself until someone suitable was found. As of yet no one had.

On a whole, the Death Eaters had done very little damage to the school, the problem was that most of the damage was centered on the Great Hall. Not in all his years at Hogwarts had he seen such a mess. Every one of the long house tables were literally blown to pieces and the banners that lined the walls were no more than ashes. The apparent blast had destroyed the wards that protected the integrity of the hall which resulted in half the ceiling coming down and several holes were blown out of the walls. Everyone who saw the destruction simply could not find the words to express themselves, so they merely stood there in shock, paying no attention to the mangled bodies of Death Eaters that were scattered throughout the area. It was obvious that either the Death Eaters did something rather stupid and got themselves blown up or someone else had crept up on them while they had their guard down and did what Dumbledore could not do. Finding the dead bodies of many more Death Eaters all over the school gave them the obvious answer. The only question that remained to be answered was who was responsible. Dumbledore had a fairly good idea, but without a scrape of proof he wasn't going to open himself up to the possibility of being proven wrong later on.

After setting yet another resume aside, the old man set his glasses down and began rubbing the bridge of his nose. It was times like these that he was immensely grateful that a new Minister of Magic had been elected. That was just one more headache that he didn't need right now. Though he had his doubts when Bill Weasley had first been elected, he was surprised to see that the young man was actually quite capable at the job and welcomed any advice that the department heads and advisers had to offer. A quality that Cornelius Fudge lacked and made him so ineffective. Though he may not always act on or agree with such advice, everyone knew that he would take each of them seriously and if he disregarded it, there was

a very good reason. After a few more minutes, reflecting on recent events, he picked his glasses back up, preparing to continue the time consuming task ahead of him. Just as he reached for another resume, a soft chuckling reached his ears. In one swift movement, he drew his wand and pointed it towards the door, but there was no one there. Scanning the room carefully he was deeply confused to find nothing. Due to protection and privacy wards, no one could enter his office without his knowledge but he was quite sure that he was not merely hearing things.

“Up here!” A familiar voice called out after whistling sharply. Snapping his head up in the direction of the voice he was only mildly surprised to see Harry Potter lying back casually on top of one of his tall book cases. “Now is that any way to welcome one of your favorite students? Besides, you might as well go ahead and put that away; it will do you no good.” He said in amusement as he glanced at the wand that was currently pointing right at him. Even though he wanted nothing more than to fire every curse he knew at the young man before him, he knew that not one would penetrate his defenses. With a huff he lowered his wand and grunted angrily as he plopped back into his chair.

“So, why have you graced me with your presence?”

“What, Headmaster?” Harry said in a hurt tone. “Aren’t you happy to see me? It was not that long ago that you would have killed to see me in this office. Well, times change, I guess, but if you are going to continue to use sarcasm like that, I suggest you take lessons because that was rather mediocre. But as to why I have ‘graced you with my presence’ as you say.” He said as he hopped off of the bookshelves. “I am actually here because of Severus and Minerva. Moody believes that your freindship ran its course long ago, but despite the troubles you had with Minerva the last few years, she still greatly respect you and thinks of you as a dear friend and as you know Severus has always thought of you as more of a father than even his own. I am here to give you a way to communicate with them both while they are on Azkaban.”

“And how would I do that?” He asked in interest. As much anger and dislike that he now held for Harry, he would still like to contact his old

colleagues again and if that meant being civil than that is what he would do.

“Fawkes.” Harry answered simply as he waved towards the sleeping phoenix. Dumbledore looked at Harry for a moment with his eyes narrowed.

“Mr. Potter, a phoenix is able to travel to every corner of the world despite wards or shields and yet Fawkes has not been able to find them.”

“You’re right, a phoenix can go anywhere in the world, so it stands to reason that if he can not find us, then we are no longer part of this world.” He replied with a grin that got even wider when the Headmaster’s eyes went wide.

“How...” He began to ask in astonishment when Harry cut him off.

“Don’t bother asking questions when the answers will be beyond your understanding. All I care to tell you is that after Voldemort was beaten, I took Azkaban out of this dimension and have now learned how we can travel back and forth at will. Bella also came up with a charm that when placed on an owl or other animal, like a phoenix, they will then be able to make it to the island IF they are carrying a letter or package that is free of all forms of harmful magic. Harmful magic also includes any form of tracking or surveillance spells. So, if you will excuse me, I would rather get done with this and be on my way.” Dumbledore was still trying to process this information as well as trying his best to stay calm when Harry implied that he wasn’t intelligent enough to understand when the man in question walked over to the perch Fawkes was currently resting on.

Having no better way of waking up a sleeping bird, Harry just lightly poked the phoenix in the chest a couple of times. The effect was immediate. Harry had to pull his hand back swiftly as the irritated bird tried to take a piece out of it. After eyeing Harry for a moment he went about straightening the feathers in his wings that got out of place with his sudden movements.

“Sorry to wake you, old boy, but you need to be awake for this.” Harry explained in jovial voice as though he thought the bird’s reaction was fairly amusing. This only brought Harry another cool stare.

/Well why didn’t you just say something instead of poking me like an infant. Silly humans/

Harry looked around the room to find the source of the voice but found nothing. Dumbledore made no indication that he had heard anything as he was just watching to see what Harry was going to do that would allow his phoenix to travel to Azkaban. After a few moments of thought he came to the only possible conclusion.

“I’m just going to pretend that I didn’t hear you say that!” He said in a confused tone as he turned back to Fawkes who was now looking at him intently and with no small amount of surprise. Without saying another word, he just lifted his hand and from his forefinger a small strand of yellow light shot out and surrounded the phoenix. At first Fawkes looked alarmed before he ‘felt’ that Harry was not trying to harm him and he calmed down but even for a bird he felt a great deal of curiosity. After a moment the light turned to a soft blue before Harry lowered his hand and broke the connection.

“Alright Fawkes, next time Dumbledore here wants you to deliver a message to either Severus or Minerva, you will instinctively know where they are and how to get there, much like you would for anyone else. Also, taking into account the differences between a Phoenix and a Dementor, you are now shielded from their power, as they are from you. Now, if you will both excuse me, I must be going, I have someplace else I have to be.”

“WAIT!” Dumbledore shouted as he stood up quickly. Harry turned back to the man curiously. He would have thought that he would have wanted him to leave as soon as possible so he was a bit confused as to what the man wanted but as soon as he spoke again he found out and it only served to annoy him further. “Why have you done this to me?” He asked in a quiet voice. Instantly Harry’s eyes narrowed.

“Is that all you can think about? Yourself?” Harry snapped angrily. “I don’t know when it happened and I don’t care. But somewhere along

the way you actually started believing all those ridiculous stories people always say about you. Most of the mindless idiots around here seem to think of you as some sort of god. All knowing and infallible. Whatever you say must be true and whatever you do must be right. You, of course, do make mistakes and when you do, everyone thinks it must have been someone else's fault, but yet you never correct them. In fact, you encourage it and deny any fault, even to yourself. You have this vision of yourself as some great crusader against everything evil, including evil you helped nurture. You knew what Tom Riddle was from the first moment you laid eyes on him, and yet you did nothing. You told no one of the acts of cruelty he committed."

"MR. POTTER THAT IS ENOUGH! I will not be spoken to in such a fashion in my school."

"SILENCE." Harry roared and Dumbledore was shoved back into his chair and an unseen force held him there. "If you please, I will continue without interruption. You asked a question and you will get the answer, whether it is something you want to hear or not. Incidentally, I must review a bit of history to explain my recent actions. Now, right after Tom Riddle graduated, he immediately joined the ranks of Grindlewald's Black Guard but escaped after he was defeated. For many years after that he went in search of power, and later, followers. After you defeated the big bad Dark Lord, anything that went wrong in the magical world you were informed of, so you obviously knew what he was doing. You knew of the dozens of people he had already tortured and killed and yet you did nothing. You even met with him on numerous occasions face to face, even once in this very office when he applied for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position. You had the power and skill to stop him, but you never stood in his way. That is, not until he killed your wife." Harry said slowly while a small grin tugged at the corners of his mouth. Dumbledore's eyes were wide and were slowly filling with unshed tears but his mind was racing. Despite all that had happened he was still deeply shocked and greatly angered when Harry said this in such a cold and casual way. As if it didn't matter.

"I find that rather hypocritical really. Judging by your actions it would seem that you believed it was perfectly alright as long as he was killing people you didn't know. But when he struck at you, and those

close to you, you would do anything to see him defeated. So you formed the Order of the Phoenix. Your own band of merry followers. People that trusted you implicitly and would die to see your chosen goal accomplished. And that was what you wanted. The only reason you stayed on as Headmaster after your wife's death was so that you could mold talented students into believing as you did, and later, lead them to their deaths if necessary. A smart move really. But then that damned prophecy popped up. Even when I was a student I knew you didn't put much stock in divination, at least not the way Professor Trelawney taught it. But a true prophecy, that was something different all together. When she came out of her trance and knew nothing of what she said you knew it to be true. After all, a charlatan like her would not have simply ignored that. She would have made out like that type of thing happened all the time.

"It must have angered you greatly to learn that you wouldn't be the one to kill Voldemort." Harry said with a knowing smirk on his face. "But you being the manipulative bastard you are, planned to make the best of it. And when my parents were murdered it made it so much easier for you. I believe you sent me to the Dursley's and back again each summer for two reasons. If I was truly supposed to defeat Voldemort then that would mean I would more than likely be on your side. So reason number one, I was sent there because with as horrid as the Dursley's were, I would more than likely arrive at Hogwarts as a scared and lonely outcast that was just dying to be accepted and treated with kindness for once. Which, of course, I was. This made it very easy for you to get your hooks into me and fashion me into your own personal weapon.

"Reason number two, and this is a big one. You wanted to find some measure of closer. After all, the fact that you ignored the abuse heaped upon Tom Riddle before he achieved some measure of control over his accidental magic was probably the biggest reason he became as cruel and evil as he did. But if I also endured much the same treatment and turned out differently than it must not have been anything you did, or rather, failed to do that created that monster."

"With the blood protection on that house it was the only safe place for you to be." Dumbledore said firmly and stubbornly which caused Harry to laugh out right.

"It is utterly amazing. Not only that you continue to claim that but the fact that you have actual convinced yourself. If this so called blood protection was so important, so vital to my security, then why did you allow me to remain at the Weasley's before my second year, the Leaky Cauldron before my third and then back to the Weasley's the following summer. It would seem that for all the protection I was under while there, I spent most of my time away. Granted, all three times I either left on my own, was basically kidnapped by Fred and George," Dumbledore raised an eyebrow when Harry left Ron's name out but Harry didn't seem to notice. "And then Mrs. Weasley raising hell about me being left there. But surprisingly you sent me back after my forth year. During his resurrection ritual, my blood was used to give Voldemort a new body, that took away any blood protection that may have been there.

"But we are getting off track. Let me give you the short version because I could continue to point out your failings in character for a long time. The bottom line is you are a manipulative old bastard who thinks of no one but himself and your own quest for vengeance. You will stop at nothing to achieve your goals and if they prove to be impossible you will continue on and get everyone killed in the process. Other people's lives are meaningless to you. Other people, period, are meaningless to you if they don't fit into your grand scheme. I'm rather surprised you weren't sorted into Slytherin when you were a student. When you meet someone all you think about is what they could do for you, what they could do to further your cause. You would go to any length, including stealing from and lying to your former mentor and oldest friend." The look in Dumbledore's eyes changed only slightly but Harry saw it and knew he was right.

"What are you talking about?" The old mage demanded angrily. Apparently he had no problem listening to Harry criticize him and his methods but didn't like being called a common thief. Harry of course was only to happy to explain.

"Before my powers awakened, I laid on my cell floor with an almost constant connection to Voldemort. I saw all of his attacks and even a couple where you confronted him. You always ended up beaten but managed to get away somehow but with wounds so severe that most

men would never recover even with the most skilled healers available. Later, after I freed Tonks, I learned that after the two events that she was present for, you had recovered and were in perfect health the following day, looking stronger even. This was before I learned the secret to immortality so naturally I was curious as to how you managed it. After thinking it over for a few days I suddenly remembered my first year at Hogwarts and the Sorcerer's Stone. All you ever said was that after speaking to Nicolas Flamel you decided to destroy the stone. But you didn't destroy it, did you?" He asked with a lopsided grin. "You let Flamel believe you had and he later died because of it but in reality you saw an opportunity to gain something of power, something that could go a long way to at least seeing Voldemort's end so you took the stone for yourself and let your friend die." Dumbledore said nothing but his face was bright red and his eyes were bulging with rage.

"Personally I think that is the reason I was packed off to Azkaban so quickly on such flimsy evidence. Like I said earlier, you wanted to be the one to kill Voldemort. Even after the prophecy and everything else that had happened, you still believed you could do it yourself. Especially with a healthy supply of the Elixir of Life on hand. You saw a way to get rid of me and take the glory for yourself, so you took the chance and it backfired. But now that Voldemort is no longer a threat you want nothing more than to crawl into bed and never wake up the next morning. You may be a master of Occlumency but I can still read your every thought. Death is what you long for the most, even more than seeing Voldemort dead. And that is precisely why I am denying it to you. Up until I was thrown into Azkaban you took everything I had from me. Everything I ever lost to Voldemort could be traced directly back to you and your methods. So before I let you die, I am going to do the same to you. And I fully intend to show the world what you truly are. Not all at once, of course, spread it out over a period of time. It will be much more entertaining and satisfying that way. But as I told you on Azkaban, I am not as forgiving as Sirius was." Harry finished coldly as he prepared to leave. With merely a thought he released the Headmaster from his unseen restraints and turned to walk out the door.

The instant his back was turned, Dumbledore jumped from his chair and with a cry like a madman he raised his wand and fired the first

curse that came to mind. In a move that was scarcely seen, Harry spun around and 'slapped' the curse right back at the man. Dumbledore's eyes went wide in surprise as the bright green glow of the killing curse slammed into his chest. An ear splitting scream echoed through the office but none outside heard the faintest whisper. Harry stood and watched in fascination as the 'all powerful' Dumbledore collapsed to the floor as his body convulsed and his screams became rough as his throat and vocal cords were obviously damaged. After a few moments Harry became bored and approached his 'former' mentor. After immobilizing him he went about healing him and placing a few calming charms on him. After all, he wanted the man to remember this meeting with great detail. When he was done he stood back up and was once again preparing to leave but someone, or rather something, else thought differently.

Fawkes had stood on his perch watching calmly as Harry spoke. He, of course, had known about Dumbledore's ways for a long time but had bonded with him when he was still a young man and as a result of that bonding he felt and experienced a great many of the man's emotions and so he understood and even shared some of his desires. Although a phoenix is supposed to be the very strength of light magic and the embodiment of nobility, a bonded phoenix sometimes becomes too attached and forgets these things. While he was greatly shocked and disgusted by Dumbledore's cowardly attack, he felt it was justified, so he did nothing. Normally he would give his life to protect the man but the deflected curse caught him by surprise so he was unable to intercept it. It seemed his mind froze for a time and he sat rooted to his perch in shock even while Harry was healing him. Soon, however, he was able to shake these feelings and the need for revenge, which normally a phoenix never experiences, coursed through him.

Harry saw and heard nothing so it was quite a shock when a sharp pain ripped through his chest when Fawkes collided with him and dug his beak into his right shoulder while his long talons tried to slash at his chest and abdomen. Harry's teeth clenched in pain as he batted away the wildly flapping wings to get his hand up toward Fawkes' head just as Dumbledore made it back to his feet with an insane smirk as he looked on but he quickly found himself restrained yet again. Harry felt warm blood run over his hand and his fingers felt

silky when they tightened around the great bird's neck. With a grunt, he pulled him away from his shoulder and held him out at arms length while his other hand restrained his legs. His wings were still flapping furiously and after a moment he burst into flames. This merely caused Harry to grin.

"Sorry, old boy, no fire flight today." He chuckled as the flames were extinguished as quickly as they erupted and the bird was frozen into place. Harry took this opportunity to quickly heal his wounds but then looked back at Fawkes curiously. "You know, it's strange really. How much corruption the human race spreads. I'm sure you know this already, Professor, but the Phoenix was the first form of life created in the universe. They never truly die and they cannot reproduce. Every one on earth has been here since the beginning of time and shall be here till the end. They are true symbols of everything good this world was meant to be. But then humans came along and some bonded with people that they thought were worthy. Unfortunately, with the decay of morals and principles in the human comes the eventual decay of the phoenix. I once read a book on these creatures that had many excerpts from the personal journals of Gryffindor himself. If you're going to learn about them you might as well get your information from one of the only men that has ever been able to speak with them. The interesting thing is that he learned that the thing a phoenix fears the most is death, to no longer exist. Strange that a creature that cannot die would fear death." Harry paused for a moment and looked between Fawkes and Dumbledore a few times before focusing his full attention on Fawkes. "When his time comes," he said indicating to Dumbledore. "You will join him in death." He said simply before dropping the restrained bird to the floor and vanishing.

XXX

Many miles away from Hogwarts, a certain family of redheads was waiting nervously for the rest of their family to arrive. Naturally, Mrs. Weasley was in a near panic, cleaning everything for the twelfth time, making sure everything was perfect while she cooked up a storm at the same time. Mr. Weasley was the only one able to calm his wife down these days but he was having a difficult time keeping calm himself so it wouldn't do any good. Bill, now in his seventh month as Minister of Magic, looked as calm and composed as ever but he

found it difficult to sit still and constantly found himself walking around to look out the windows in anticipation. Charlie just found everyone's reactions laughable and amused himself by humming some annoying tune that was driving everyone else insane. Then you have Ron and Hermione.

Ron's face looked like a thunder cloud and it was clear that he wanted to be anywhere else at the moment. Life after Voldemort had been rough for him. At one time, he was a fairly respected Auror that was taken seriously for his keen analytical mind and his fair fighting abilities. However, that changed swiftly after Voldemort's defeat. For a time, he helped rebuild the Auror Division with Frank and Neville Longbottom but quickly fell out of favor with his constant insistence that his brothers, Fred and George, not be pardoned for past infractions. In fact he demanded that all of the people on Harry's so called 'protection list' be arrested as traitors the moment they were found, whether they had committed any crime or not. Not to mention his opinions that the newly rebuilt Ministry immediately begin making plans to seize Azkaban by force and bring the new Dark Lord, Harry Potter, to face justice. Even knowing the considerable power Harry now possessed, his jealousy and anger clouded his judgment and he quickly became a liability. While the new leaders of the Ministry may not like the recent turn of events, they were not stupid enough to make Harry an enemy by declaring war on him when twenty five percent of the witches and wizards of Great Britain had already been wiped out during the war with Voldemort. Ron now works as an assistant trainer for the Chuddeley Cannons, a job he loudly expresses that he is over qualified for and can usually be heard badmouthing the team's current keeper. The only reason he currently had a job with the team was because the current team captain is a former teammate of Charlie's and he kept him on as a favor. As much as he despised Ron's recent actions, Charlie had no desire to see his younger brother lose yet another job when he had a young son to take care of.

Despite the pain and anger she felt of Harry's rejection, Hermione was still immensely happy to be seeing Ginny again. She was even looking forward to seeing the twins despite the fact that they were on opposing sides of a very nasty argument concerning Harry the last time she saw them. She was currently feeding her son Robert for the fourth time that afternoon in yet another futile attempt to distract herself

for a while. They were all very surprised to receive the message that the estranged members of their family would be returning that day. But that surprise was quickly forgotten as Mrs. Weasley got everyone busy to make the already spotless house 'presentable'. They were given no exact time for their arrival so everyone nearly had heart failure when someone knocked quite loudly on the front door. After calming herself, Mrs. Weasley went to see who was there with a bit of disappointment considering her children had no reason to knock on the door like strangers.

When she opened the door she looked about in confusion when she saw no one. That was until she looked down and saw two small girls looking up at her with wide mischievous grins. The two greeted the Weasley matriarch with big wave and an excited hello before they rushed passed her into the house. Molly spun around with a look of absolute confusion on her face and saw the two bouncing around the living room, shaking everyone's hands and greeting them like they were old friends. They even seemed to know everyone's names and made comments referring to their occupations and interests. That is, everyone except Ron who they seemed to ignore as if he were not even there. One of the little girls, who had long chestnut colored hair, enthusiastically asked Hermione if she could hold Robert. Everyone seemed to be held in the same state of shock and confusion that held Molly rooted to her spot next to the front door that still stood open.

Charlie was currently just staring open mouthed into the face of the young girl that introduced herself as Catherine, as she rambled on excitedly about all she had learned about dragons and their behavior. Despite the completely odd situation, he was surprised that a girl so young could hold that much information. He figured she must be around five or six years old and she had long glossy black hair and bright vivid green eyes. He knew he had never previously met this girl but there was something strikingly familiar about her. Looking her over for yet another time his attention was brought back to her eyes. Very familiar... Charlie's eyes went wide as he suddenly figured out what was so familiar and probably would have shouted in shock if he had not been cut off by a loud burst of laughter. Everyone it seemed was a bit on edge as they jumped to their feet and drew their wands, looking for the source of the commotion. Molly dropped her wand and gasped when she saw Fred, George and Ginny standing just inside

the kitchen as the twins had to hold on to each other to prevent themselves from falling as they laughed hysterically. Ginny looked just as amused but had the good grace to at least try to cover it up, though it took a lot of effort. The two young girls skipped over to the twins with wide grins and sparkling eyes.

“Did we do it right, Uncle Fred?” Catherine asked as she jumped into his arms and her sister did the same with George.

“Yes, you did. The two of you were perfect.” Fred praised. “We wouldn’t have been able to plan it better ourselves.”

“Well, it was Anna’s idea but I came up with how to act and what to say.” Catherine said really fast with excitement. All the Weasley’s watched on with a morbid sense of fascination. The twins were going on and on about how proud they were and what not. After some time, the Weasleys were able to pull themselves together but were a little annoyed that they were made the butt of some joke when they should have realized that after being gone for several years Fred and George were bound to pull something. Mrs. Weasley was the first to approach, or rather charge at the group and sweep them all into the biggest hug she could muster as she cried. Anna and Catherine, who were still being held by the twins, almost gagged when they were crushed between the twins and their mother. Ginny however was smart and side stepped the collision of bodies and watched on with a smile when Molly backed up and asked the question everyone seemed to be wondering.

“Who are these two young ladies?” She asked as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

“Well, this here is my Goddaughter, Anna.” George said happily as he held the girl in his arms.

“And this is my goddaughter, Catherine.”

“Who in the hell would be insane enough to name either of you Godfather to their children?” Bill asked with a slight smirk while he was questioning the wisdom of placing the twin pranksters in a position to help raise and corrupt little girls.

"It was Harry, wasn't it?" Charlie blurted out as he remembered his realization before his siblings showed up. Everyone looked at Charlie stupidly for a moment before turning back to the objects of the discussion.

"My daddy is not insane!" Anna snapped before smirking a little bit. "He's only misunderstood." Despite wondering who the mother was, everyone smiled at this response. That is, except Ron who sneered at the two as if they were something less than dirt for being Harry's children.

"That bitch Lestrage." He muttered darkly to himself as he took in Catherine's black hair and aristocratic features. He spoke softly but his voice seemed to echo throughout the room and everyone heard him. The Weasleys were looking at him in confusion but Catherine pulled herself out of Fred's arms. She ran over to Ron and kicked him squarely in the shin causing him to cry out.

"Don't you talk about my Mommy!" She yelled before kicking him in his other shin as well. Everyone was right back to feeling nothing but shock after this little revelation. With the exception of Ron and Hermione, everyone was totally flabbergasted at the very notion of Harry Potter being involved in any way with the former Death Eater, much less having a child with her. Both Ron and Hermione were surprised that he was able to speak of it at all. He had been trying to say something about it for ages now, but that bit of information had apparently been well protected by one of Harry's secrecy charms.

"Is this true?" Arthur gasped out as he looked back to Fred and George. The two merely nodded as if it was nothing of importance. But Ron, being himself, just couldn't keep his mouth shut.

"And did the other little urchin come from that bubbling fool Tonks?" He asked scathingly as his eyes bulged in anger. Once again, silence. Unlike his brother, George managed to hold on to the girl in his arms as she tried to struggle free to no doubt attack his younger brother for his remarks about her family.

“WHAT IS GOING ON?” Molly shouted and everyone winced at the sheer volume of her voice and it was even enough to halt Anna’s attempts to attack Ron. It’s amazing how such a lovely woman could scare such strong and powerful wizards and witches into silence. Fortunately, Anna and Catherine had been warned about her temper so that they wouldn’t become frightened and lose control of their magic. Under the intense stare of their mother, Fred, George and Ginny nodded to each other and began explaining. Thankfully, multiple marriages, while rare, in the magical world, were not unheard of. In fact, Molly’s uncle had had two wives, but they had become jealous of each other and ended up killing him. The biggest difficulty they had was explaining how Harry had become involved with Bellatrix of all people. All the while they were cursing Harry for not arriving yet and leaving them to explain.

It was easy to explain how Harry and Tonks had gotten together, after all, she was a friend to him before he was sent to Azkaban and when he discovered her locked in a cell, he would no doubt want to know why she was there. And the rest was history. But with Bella it was different. It was simple to tell them that Harry and Tonks had become rather bored with no one else to talk to, but the idea that Harry would choose Bella of all people left them confused and the three Weasleys didn’t really know how to explain it sufficiently. But surprising it was Hermione that helped them out.

“Well, from what Harry told us, he and Tonks chose her because despite what she had done, she was the only inmate that they both had any familiarity with. Plus with his time in prison and the almost constant visions of Voldemort he probably lost a lot of his hate and prejudices against people who use dark magic. Or something like that. It stands to reason that when three people are pretty much alone together for an extended period of time, and have no one else to talk to, they will eventually begin to get along and start to develop feelings for each other as they get to know each other better.” Hermione tried to explain as if it were something she read in a book about psychology. After a great deal more explaining everyone just decided to accept the fact even if they didn’t agree with it.

“Well, you two obviously knew about this so why didn’t you say anything before now?” Arthur asked Ron and Hermione curiously

since he knew his wife was sure to ask the same thing, only be more accusing in her tone. But once again the answer came from someone who was not asked. In this case, Ginny.

"Everyone who knew was put under a security charm to prevent them from speaking of it, much like they were after they first went to Azkaban to 'free' Harry. He doesn't want his personal life plastered all over the news papers and be open for public debate like it was when he was at Hogwarts."

"Also it will protect my children should they ever leave Azkaban." Everyone turned sharply to the source of the strong voice and everyone gasped when they saw Harry sitting casually in a previously unoccupied chair. "If no one knows who they truly are, then certain elements in the magical world will not seek to harm them simply because I am their father." Harry stated matter of factly as he shot a quick glance at Ron indicating that he was speaking of those that believed as he did. "Consequently, the lot of you are now under this same security charm. As these two can attest too." He continues as he gestured toward Ron and Hermione, not even bothering to speak their names or even look at them. "My charm is perfect, with no loopholes." He took a moment to explain the guidelines of this charm for everyone's benefit so that each of them understood perfectly. While most of them did not like having some unknown charm over them, they understood the logic behind it. Besides, most of them, being members of the Order, had had such charms placed on them before, so it was nothing new. After a few more minutes of discussion, Molly's eyes went wide for a moment before she quickly turned to her only daughter and rushed to her. With all of the strange and shocking news they were getting from the moment they first arrived, she had completely forgotten to greet Ginny properly.

Ginny for her part seemed to grow a little nervous when she saw her mother approaching and Harry looked like he was planning to run and hide. Despite the changes that had taken place in him over the years, he still greatly respected the Weasleys and he still wanted their approval. When she had reached her daughter, Molly threw her arms around Ginny, apologizing for forgetting her, but she suddenly jumped back with a surprised yelp. Ginny grimaced as her mother looked at her with wide eyes before looking down. More specifically at

Ginny's midsection. With a shaky hand she reached out and poked her stomach that was concealed in loose robes.

"OH MY BABY!" She shrieked as she once again threw her arms around Ginny and began sobbing hysterically while everyone else watched on in confusion. After a few moments Ginny was able to untangle herself from her mother. "How far along are you?" She asked while she sniffed a few times, trying to hold back another onslaught of tears.

"Seven and a half months." Ginny answered carefully as she glanced at her father and two oldest brothers. She didn't care about Ron, as far as she was concerned, he was no longer family to her. Hearing this statement, realization dawned on everyone present and every Weasley male was now on their feet and Hermione glanced sideways toward Harry who looked like he was planning a quick escape if needed. That told her all she needed to know.

"WHAT?" Her brothers and father shouted loudly. Almost immediately, Fred and George inconspicuously put down their respective Goddaughters and began moving slowly in Harry's direction. "Who's the father?" Arthur asked after taking a moment to calm down, but it was very difficult. A slight coughing sound brought their attention back towards Harry.

"Um, ah, that, that would be me." He said quietly as his face began to turn red. With this statement not even Arthur could keep his temper under control as he, Bill, Charlie and Ron began advancing on Harry. However, Fred and George were quick to intercept them. Positioning themselves right in their path with stern expressions that looked out of place on their normally carefree faces.

"I don't think you want to do anything you may regret later." Fred said seriously as the group stopped suddenly.

"Get out of our way, boys. I don't want to have to move you by force. I will not have ANYONE taking advantage of my daughter." Arthur said with barely restrained anger.

"We aren't going to move." George spoke up in a solemn tone. "And I'm afraid you will find moving us by force a bit more of a challenge than you think. We didn't defeat the Death Eaters, while being outnumbered ten to one, for nothing."

"The man already has two wives, and you have no problem with him messing around with our little sister just because it suits him?" Bill asked through clenched teeth. It was obvious that Arthur, Bill and Charlie were extremely angry but it was also very clear to those watching that the only reason Ron was at their sides was because he thought that taking on Harry four to one would be more in his favor.

"Harry doesn't have two wives." Ginny spoke up in annoyance, temporarily drawing attention away from Harry. "He has three." She continued with a smirk. Everyone looked at her gob smacked as if their brains had just shut down. "And Harry didn't take advantage of me. If anything he was the one that was taken advantaged of, the first time anyway."

"So, now you finally live up to your reputation," Ron was the first one to find his voice as he sneered at his sister in much the same way he did to Anna and Catherine. "You're nothing more than one of Potter's little whores." With this statement everyone in the room seemed to turn their anger towards him. But even the combined anger of the temperamental Weasleys was dwarfed in comparison to Harry's. With a ferocious growl, he literally threw Fred and George out of his way before knocking through Bill and Charlie to get at his former best friend. Too angry to even think of using magic, he did it the old fashioned way and landed a heavy punch to the side of Ron's head. The force of the blow threw the youngest Weasley male backwards with alarming force, sending him crashing through the couch side table and on into the wall. Subconsciously, Harry's magic was holding everyone in their place and preventing them from interfering. Ron lay dazed beside the fireplace when Harry approached and grabbed him by his lower jaw. With the help of a bit of wandless magic Harry easily lifted the man off of the floor and held him a good eight inches off of the ground while Ron's hands tried in vain to break Harry's hold on him.

“You speak so casually of her reputation as if it were something she earned. Nearly every witch and wizard in England spits on her and shouts obscenities at her for simply walking down the street because of you and your lies. You are no better than that piece of shit fudge or even Percy. Everyone who disagrees with you, you have to attack in some way. There are countless examples of you using your ‘former’ position as an Auror to try and dictate other people’s lives. Following along as Fudge tried to destroy those that would not see things his way. If no crime was committed, you would invent one or seek to destroy their reputation, such as you did with Ginny. Your own sister, because she believed in my innocence while you were so blinded by the attention you always wanted that you didn’t care who you stepped on in the process, even if it was your own family. I always knew that you were jealous of the fame and attention that was heaped upon me but I had never thought that you would go as far as you did to achieve some level of notoriety.

“You came to Azkaban with Dumbledore to free me so I could clean up your mess just like he did. After everything you have done over the past eight years, the only difference between you and the Death Eaters is that they are dead and you are alive. A situation I will gladly remedy if you ever speak to Ginny that way again, do I make myself clear?” Harry growled as he stared into Ron’s panic filled eyes. He nodded his head slightly through Harry’s grasp as he tried to choke out his response. Satisfied that he sent the proper message to the little shit Harry pulled him away from the wall and dropped him through the coffee table before storming out of the house and vanishing.

As soon as Harry left, everyone was able to move freely once again but they didn’t seem to notice. Everyone stood in absolute shock. Well, except Fred and George who looked like Christmas had come early and Ginny stood with Anna and Catherine, all three had smug smiles on their faces as Ginny looked down at her unconscious brother. Finally Molly’s maternal instincts kicked in and she rushed over to Ron and revived him. It took a few minutes for him to clear all of the cobwebs out of his head and make sure there wasn’t any serious injuries but when he did he became furious. Standing up, he rounded on his family as if they were somehow at fault.

“Why didn’t any of you do anything? That monster could have killed me and all you do is stand there and let it happen.”

“Well, before I comment I feel it is my duty to inform everyone here that when Harry’s anger gets out of control like that his magic tends to ‘restrain’ everyone present to prevent them from interfering.” Fred informed his family calmly as if nothing had happened before turning back to Ron. “However, even if this were not the case, it is more than likely that I still would have done NOTHING. Or it is also equally possible that I would have taken the opportunity to get in a few shots myself. After all, it wasn’t all that long ago that our dear younger brother here gave an interview with the Daily Prophet and said, and I quote. “Despite the fact that the fugitives we seek are my brothers, it is my belief that they should be hunted down like dogs.”

“Yes, I must agree with my dear twin. In fact, the only reason we didn’t blast him with a few curses the moment we arrived was because we gave Harry our word that we would ‘try to move on from the actions of the past’. I believe those were his exact words. But sadly, Ron’s mouth and ego had to get in the way.” George picked up from where his brother left off. They both spoke in dramatic tones as if they were playing a role in some Greek tragedy. Looking at his father and oldest brothers, Ron could tell that they shared the twin’s feelings on the matter. They would not have stepped in either, even Hermione. With no thought of what he had done to his family over the years, he was angered by their ‘betrayal’ and looked at them all with contempt before storming out himself.

XXX

Harry was currently sitting in his office on Azkaban speaking with both Tonks and Bella. They had returned from visiting Tonks’ mother Andromeda shortly after Harry left the Weasley’s. All three of them had first visited the couple shortly after Anna and Catherine were born. Since her father was muggleborn and they lived in the muggle world there was little danger that someone would recognize them should they be seen. To say the couple was shocked by their sudden arrival and relationship would have been a gross understatement. Andromeda, coming from a hardcore pureblood family, multiple marriages and even marriages between family members was not

uncommon. But her husband was different. Both of these situations have been illegal in the muggle world for a very, very long time, so finding out that his daughter was now married to the same man as her aunt was just not acceptable to him. That was the last time Harry had gone with Tonks to visit her parents. He planned to just give the man time to come to terms with the situation but five years later and he still wasn't giving an inch. The addition of Ginny into the relationship had fueled his anger to even greater heights according to Tonks. So he just stayed away from the man. Thankfully though, he was still more than happy to accept Anna and Catherine.

It was some time later that Ginny returned with the twins and two very excited little girls. As soon as they entered the room they rambled on about all they had done while at the Weasley's and how much they liked everyone. Harry was a bit relieved that his confrontation with Ron hadn't ruined everything that day. It turned out that it went quite well after that although both Molly and Hermione were worried about Ron but no one else seemed to care. Molly, being herself, absolutely loved Anna and Catherine and they in turn loved the attention she and the others heaped upon them. After the initial shock wore off, everyone decided to try to accept Ginny's relationship with Harry because they could all see how happy he made her.

The following week Harry returned to the Burrow to apologize for his actions. Despite their reserved attitude the week before, Harry was still nervous as hell to speak to the closest thing he had to parents when he was younger. They may have been reserved with Ginny but she wouldn't be with him today. Thankfully his fears were unfounded. It seemed that his fierce defense of Ginny's honor the week before had made an impact with the Weasley men, so they were willing to let things be and accept it. Harry was greatly relieved by this since he deeply respected the Weasleys and the last thing he wanted was to come between Ginny and her family.

The situation with Ron however was more disturbing. After he left the Burrow he seemed to have disappeared. No one, not even Hermione had heard from him. After waiting at their apartment for three days for him to return, Hermione temporarily moved into the Burrow so that Molly could help out with the baby. Though he did not like her in the least, Harry still felt a little pity for her. She had made her decision

about who to side with many years ago and now everything was crashing down around her. She had to apologize to a former friend that she had betrayed only to be rejected. The man she chose to follow blindly like a mindless sychophant was slowly being discredited in the press and was very quickly losing the support structure he had spent over a century building due to information she was sure either Harry, or his supporters, was supplying. Information Dumbledore couldn't deny in any convincing manner. And finally, the school friend she chose over the other, and later married, had disappeared, apparently abandoning her and their son. Despite the slight pity he felt for her, Harry wouldn't have done anything differently, she had made her choices and she would have to live with the consequences, just like everyone else.

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A month and a half later, Harry was standing outside the infirmary waiting for someone to come tell him what was going on. The first two times it had been only him, Bella and Tonks, so he was present during the whole time. But this time it was different. They had a proper medical staff and a chief healer, Madam Bliss, that was just as strict as Madam Pomfrey ever was and she refused to let anyone of the opposite sex within the ward. Mr. Weasley watched Harry with amusement from across the room. He had been through the same thing eight times before so he had gotten used to healers peculiarities.

When Ginny went into labor, just a few hours ago, Harry had reluctantly agreed to bring her parents to Azkaban for the birth. He was deeply worried about their reactions to certain people that they would come into contact with. Thankfully, Molly's mind was only focused on one thing and that was getting to her daughter. Both Tonks and Bella were already with Ginny when they arrived so Mr. Weasley had not seen her, but he had yet to hear any curses being thrown on the other side of the door so that was a good sign, he hoped. Fred and George seemed to find his anxiousness amusing as he constantly stood from his chair to pace the length of the corridor several times before starting the cycle all over again.

"God, I was never this nervous with Anna or Catherine. What do healers have against men being there for the delivery anyway?"

Napoleonic power monger!” Harry muttered to himself in reference to Madam Bliss. Looking across the room he saw that Mr. Weasley seemed to be as calm as ever. “How can you remain so calm?” Harry asked in an annoyed tone as Arthur merely smiled.

“This is my second grandchild Harry, and I had to wait for seven children before that. After all that, a man is forced to learn patience.” At the mention of his seven children Harry just had to ask.

“Have you heard anything from Ron yet?” Harry asked with a sigh as he lowered himself down into a chair opposite from the older man. He certainly had no love for the man but his disappearance has hurt Molly greatly. At the mention of their brother’s name, the twins turned their attention elsewhere. They no longer thought of him as family and had no desire to hear anything more about him. However Arthur’s features immediately darkened. He really did not want to talk about it but he felt that Harry needed to know.

“No, we haven’t. He has not even contacted Hermione. For the last few weeks Bill has had the Department of Mysteries keeping an eye on a group of witches and wizards in Bulgaria that are calling themselves The Dragons. They seem to believe that it is their duty to destroy you and those you have under your protection. They say it’s for the public good, but they are behaving a great deal like the Death Eaters did. Attacking and killing anyone who speaks out against them, including those in neighboring countries. It’s only a matter of time before they branch out even farther, if they haven’t already. Bill has reason to believe that Ron has joined this group. He may even be one of its founding members.” He explained in a weary voice as he rubbed his face. Harry put his elbows on his knees and just looked at the floor for sometime before speaking.

“I’m sorry, Arthur. I never meant for anything like this to happen.”

“I know you didn’t. We all do. To be honest with you, I believe Ron had the potential for this for many years now. Maybe even before you were imprisoned. He has always felt that he was in his brothers’ shadow. In a way he was but he took that fact harder than most children would and resented anyone that achieved what he could not. Though he held you as a great friend while you were younger he still

believed that he was always in your shadow aswell. I think that was why he was so eager to believe you were guilty. Without you there he was in a position to stand in the spotlight himself.” Harry just nodded in understanding. There were many times when they were children that Ron's jealousy for him, his brothers or anyone for that matter, made him a very unlikable person, but they had always worked through that. At least that's what he had thought at the time. The silence was broken when a high pitched cry seemed to cut through the air like a knife and Harry immediately jumped to his feet and charged at the door only to find it locked. He spent several moments trying to knock the door down before remembered that he was a wizard and could easily overcome any locking spell. Throwing a sheepish grin at the three men with him, he unlocked the infirmary doors and ran in with Arthur, Fred and George right behind him. He took the fact that Madam Bliss didn't try to intercept them as a good sign and they rushed to the bed that was currently surrounded by squealing women while Anna and Catherine jumped up and down on a nearby bed.

"WE HAVE A SISTER! WE HAVE A SISTER!" The two girls shouted loudly in excitement.

When he reached her bedside, Ginny was red faced and had a layer of sweat coating her body but Harry thought that he had never seen her look more beautiful. Madam Bliss was just handing Ginny the small bundle when he arrived. Molly was standing on one side of the bed with tears streaming down her face while Bella and Tonks were jumping up and down hugging each other like excited teenage girls, much like their daughters were doing right behind them. Getting down on one knee Harry kissed the side of Ginny's head while he stared into the pink face of his sleeping child. He could only smile at the fact that he now had three daughters. While most men would certainly have wanted to have a son after having two girls already, Harry found the idea of yet another little girl running around appealing. Sure, he would love to have a son someday, but it will come in good time.

"What should we call her?" Harry asked quietly.

"Oh, how about Gretchen?" Tonks suggested with excitement. Everyone looked at her blankly. "What? I had a friend named

Gretchen and I always thought it was cute.” She continued defensively.

“No, they have to stick with the pattern.” Bella said as she whacked her niece upside the head.

“Pattern? What pattern?” Harry asked cluelessly, and everyone else looked just as confused causing Bella to huff in annoyance.

“Anna is named for Nymphadora’s mother and Catherine is my middle name. So you might as well stick with what works. You have to name her after Ginny or after someone on her side of the family.”

“We can make a tradition out of it.” Tonks exclaimed happily drawing more curious stares.

“In that case I want to call her Emily. It’s Mum’s middle name.” Ginny decided as she smiled at her mother who once again burst out in tears as she hugged her daughter. Harry took the opportunity to pick up his youngest and he just stared at her in wonder.

“It never gets old, does it?” Harry looked over to see Arthur looking at him knowingly. Harry just smile and shock his head, not trusting his voice to speak as his eyes filled with tears. He was right, Harry didn’t think he could ever get tired of this feeling. All his life he had wanted his parents to be with him, to have a real family. However having his three daughters made everything else seem unimportant. All the hardships he had endured in his life had led him to where he was today and he wouldn’t trade it away for anything. Not even a happy childhood with his parents without the threat of Voldemort hanging over everyone’s head.

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Over the next few months Harry stepped up his media blitz against Albus Dumbledore with the aid various news organizations by giving evidence of some of his more questionable actions, including his theft from Nicholas Flamel that eventually resulted in the other man's death. Normally he would get the information to Rita Skitter because she could always be trusted to make sure it was seen in the worst

possible light and she would leave his name out of it if he could guarantee her more information later on. And getting these stories as an exclusive was certainly something that she would keep quiet for. Not to mention the small fortune she was making by selling her stories to any interested news organization. Of course Harry also had her under a secrecy charm just in case but she didn't have to know that now did she? To say that the public was disgusted at the conduct and deceptions by one of their most revered figures was a gross understatement.

Of course he tried to deny everything but as Harry always believed, the people were sheep and they were eating it up and believing every word. Of course his popularity was already in decline after everyone found out that he sent 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' to prison wrongfully. Skitter's articles appeared in every major news publication and many were discussed in debates over the wireless. As more proof seemed to surface, Dumbledore became resigned to his fate and lost all fight in him. He had already lost his position as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and the Hogwarts Board of Governors was already actively searching for a replacement for the position of Headmaster of Hogwarts.

Unfortunately for Harry, the peaceful life he desired with his family had to be put on hold temporarily. Despite himself, he was saddened to learn that Ron was indeed a member of the group that called themselves the Dragons just as Bill had suspected. They had definitive proof when, six months after he disappeared, Ron had attacked the Burrow with seven other members in an attempt to kidnap his own son. Luckily, they had picked a day that the twins were visiting their mother and they were defeated quite easily, although Ron managed to escape. Not long after that, news got out that the Dragons had taken control of the Durmstrang Institute of Magic and made it their headquarters. After three failed attempts to recapture the school, the Bulgarian Ministry formally asked for international assistance.

Bill was prepared to send every available Auror to aid the Bulgarian Ministry but before he could issue the proper orders Harry had mysteriously appeared in his office and told him to stay out of it and that he would take care of it. When asked what he meant he replied,

“These Dragons want to destroy me and my people, I’m simply going to give them the opportunity.”

Since this was a fight that would be taking place away from Azkaban, so their lives were not in immediate danger, Harry decided to lay out the situation to them and let the people of Azkaban decide for themselves if they were to fight or not. Not surprisingly, nearly everyone capable agreed to go. After all, they might not be able to attack Azkaban but they were attacking others while trying to rally support against them and their leader, Harry. It was almost unanimously decided that Azkaban would supply the support the Bulgarian Ministry so desperately needed. The only outsiders Harry allowed in was a representative of both the Bulgarian and English governments so that no one could claim that Harry was launching illegal operations in foreign territory to gain more power. After receiving detailed plans to the school they set out for battle once again.

As Harry expected it was more of a minor scuffle than the grand siege the government had believed would take place. Despite the fact that these people wanted him dead, Harry was impressed at the modifications they had applied to the wards protecting Durmstrang. The wards were now well beyond Hogwarts standards and only Azkaban surpassed them in its protection. However this was a moot point, with the help of Bella and Snape Harry shattered the wards in just under half an hour. Using the maps the Bulgarians had provided them, they quickly spread out into their individual strike teams and entered the school from different locations. Whether they didn’t notice the wards crashing down around them or they were too shocked by it, wasn’t known; after all they had repelled the three previous attacks by the Ministry already. Their ignorance, or shock, proved to be their downfall as they were not prepared for a fight. They seemed fairly confident when they were attacking defenseless people but they seemed to know nothing of what they were doing when involved in pitched battles with skilled fighters.

Unlike with the Death Eaters, they actually tried to take as many prisoners as possible and used deadly force only when necessary. One such occasion involved Fred and Ron Weasley. The youngest Weasley male obviously had no intention of going quietly and actually

sought his brother out. Ron was on the defensive almost the entire time but he refused to give in and attacked with an animalistic rage. As a result he had suffered many grievous wounds before he was finally taken into custody. Unfortunately, for the Weasley family anyway, he would later die from his wounds. When they received the news both Molly and Hermione were naturally almost inconsolable. Harry felt sorry for the two women but he felt a bit guilty at being thankful that it was Fred that had killed Ron and not himself. He was already directly responsible for the death of Percy and he didn't want another Weasley to die at his hands.

Those that had been captured were held in high security holding cells within the Bulgarian Ministry until a new secure facility was built. This new massive prison was built with Harry's aid in the wastelands of northern Siberia and would house the most dangerous magical criminals from around the world.

As a result of their help in retaking Durmstrang, the Bulgarians had agreed to the same terms that Harry had forced Dumbledore to sign. It was not long before he had signed similar agreements with nearly every magical government in the world. Now, every citizen of Azkaban could walk freely throughout the world without fear of prosecution for past crimes. Also, Harry now had the legal right to eliminate any threat to Azkaban's security throughout the world regardless of national borders. In return, the Dementors would stand guard over the new prison facility in Siberia in alternating shifts with Azkaban and, after discussing it with everyone, he also agreed that they would give aid to those that agreed to his terms should any serious threat arise. BUT, they would only get involved if absolutely necessary. He had no intention of putting his people in harms way simply because some weak minister wanted to save the lives of his own people by throwing away the lives of others.

After Ron's death, Hermione gave up her apartment and moved in to the Burrow permanently to make things simpler for when she went back to work and Molly was watching Robert. She got a job with the Department of Mysteries, investigating and researching different magical artifacts. At first Harry was a bit uncomfortable when he visited the Burrow while she was present but soon just settled for ignoring her entirely, never even acknowledging her presence.

Hermione was greatly saddened that her relationship with Harry did not improve as time went on but she had resigned herself to the fact that the friendship she had so carelessly thrown away those many years ago was truly gone for good.

Ginny rarely left Azkaban because of the reactions she usually attracted from the wizarding population in England, so Harry gave Molly and Arthur access to the island so that they could visit her and Emily anytime they choose. Naturally, both Anna and Catherine were thrilled to have a new little sister but were a bit disappointed to find that she was so small and couldn't play with them yet. Harry almost had a heart attack one night when Bella decided to announce that she wanted to have another child of her own. He just looked at the woman in fright as he remembered the night she gave birth to Catherine. While it isn't uncommon for a woman to curse while in labor, it is unusual for said woman to 'literally' curse. He still winced every time he thought about that horrible testicle biting hex she had used on him.

Much to everyone's delight, a double wedding had been given for Fred and Katie Bell and George and Angelina Johnson. Like Harry had told Snape once, weddings were a rare thing on Azkaban so it gave them a legitimate reason to have a big party. It seemed that the Weasley family was in a baby boom period when both Katie and Angelina ended up pregnant right after the Wedding and Bill and Fleur Delacour, who have been seeing each other for some time now, were expecting one of their own. Due to Molly's demands after discovering the pregnancy they were now planning a wedding of their own. Besides, as Charlie like to tease him, it is unacceptable for the Minister of Magic to have a 'bastard' child.

Thankfully there had been no further threats serious enough for Harry to get involved. It would seem that the possibility of the fierce fighters of Azkaban descending upon them was enough to keep most people in line. The public outcry against Harry had all but disappeared and he was able to sit back and relax for once without heavy thoughts weighing on his mind and the weight of the world on his shoulders. Bella got what she wanted and soon gave birth to a healthy baby boy whom they named Sirius James after both Sirius and Harry's father, once again sticking with their knew tradition.

Harry was currently sitting in the living room of the family's quarters with a sleeping Sirius held close to him and Catherine asleep next to him with her body wrapped tightly in his free arm. Tonks was sitting before the fire with Anna bouncing around her with an ungodly amount of energy and Ginny and Bella were on the floor playing with Emily who was now almost two years old. Looking around at all of his children Harry thought back to the question Arthur had asked him the day Emily was born.

"No, it never gets old." Harry muttered to himself quietly before leaning his head back and drifting off to sleep himself.

THE END